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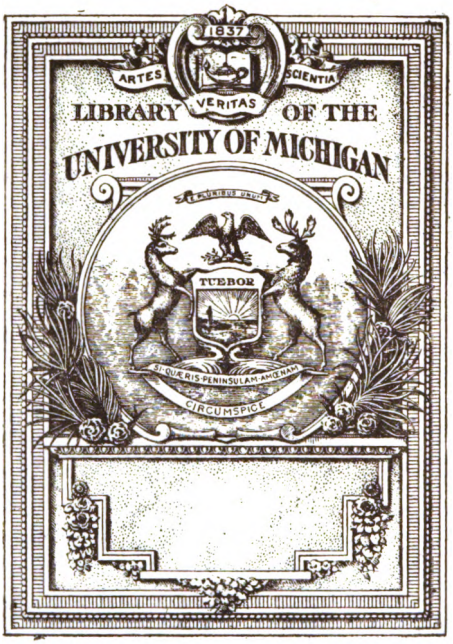

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CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO

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CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO

BY

I. ZANGWILL

AUTHOR OF 'THE OLD MAIDS' CLUB,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1892

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CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO.

BOOK I.—(continued).

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOLY LAND LEAGUE.

'Oh, these English Jews!' said Melchitzedek Pinchas in German.

'What have they done to you now?' said Guedalyah the Greengrocer in Yiddish.

The two languages are relatives, and often speak as they pass by.

'I have presented my book to every one of them, but they have paid me scarce enough to purchase poison for them all,' said the little poet, scowling. The cheek-bones stood out sharply beneath the tense bronzed skin; the black hair was tangled and unkempt, and the beard untrimmed; the eyes darted venom.

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'One of them—Gideon, M.P., the stockbroker—engaged me to teach his son for his *Bar-mitzvah*. But the boy is so stupid—so stupid! Just like his father. I have no doubt he will grow up to be a Rabbi. I teach him his portion—I sing the words to him with a most beautiful voice, but he has as much ear as soul. Then I write him a speech—a wonderful speech for him to make to his parents and the company at the breakfast—and in it, after he thanks them for their kindness, I make him say how, with the blessing of the Almighty, he will grow up to be a good Jew and munificently support Hebrew literature and learned men, like his revered teacher, Melchitzedek Pinchas. And then he shows it to his father, and his father says it is not written in good English, and that another scholar has already written him a speech. Good English! Gideon has as much knowledge of style as the Rev. Elkan Benjamin of decency. Ah, I will shoot them both! I know I do not speak English like a native, but what language under the sun is there I cannot write? French, German, Spanish, Arabic—they flow from my pen like honey from a rod. As for Hebrew, you know, Guedalyah, I and you are the only two men in England who can write Holy Language grammatically. And yet these miserable stockbrokers, Men-of-the-

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Earth, they dare to say I cannot write English, and they have given me the sack—I who was teaching the boy true Judaism and the value of Hebrew literature.'

'What! They didn't let you finish teaching the boy his Hebrew portion because you couldn't write English!'

'No; they had another pretext. One of the servant-girls said I wanted to kiss her—lies and falsehoods! I was kissing my finger after kissing the *Mezuzah*, and the stupid abomination thought I was kissing my hand to her. It sees itself that they don't kiss the *Mezuzahs* often in that house—the impious crew! And what will be now? The stupid boy will go home to breakfast in a bazaar of costly presents, and he will make the stupid speech written by the fool of an Englishman, and the ladies will weep. But where will be the Judaism in all this? Who will vaccinate him against free-thinking as I would have done? Who will infuse into him the true patriotic fervour, the love of his race, the love of Zion, the land of his fathers?'

'Ah, you are verily a man after my own heart!' said Guedalyah the Greengrocer, overswept by a wave of admiration. 'Why should you not come with me to my Beth-Hamidrash to-night, to the meeting for the foundation of

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the Holy Land League?—That cauliflower will be fourpence, mum.'

'Ah, what is that?' said Pinchas.

'I have an idea. A score of us meet to-night to discuss it.'

'Ah, yes! You have always ideas. You are a sage and a saint, Guedalyah. The Beth-Hamidrash which you have established is the only centre of real orthodoxy and Jewish literature in London. The ideas you expound in the Jewish papers for the amelioration of the lot of our poor brethren are most statesmanlike. But these donkey-head English rich people—what help can you expect from them? They do not even understand your plans. They have only sympathy with needs of the stomach.'

'You are right—you are right, Pinchas!' said Guedalyah the Greengrocer eagerly.

He was a tall, loosely-built man, with a pasty complexion capable of shining with enthusiasm. He was dressed shabbily, and in the intervals of selling cabbages projected the regeneration of Judah.

'That is just what is beginning to dawn upon me, Pinchas,' he went on. 'Our rich people give plenty away in charity; they have good hearts, but not Jewish hearts. As the verse says.—A bundle of rhubarb and two pounds of Brussels sprouts, and threepence-

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half-penny change. Thank you ; much obliged. —Now, I have bethought myself, why should we not work out our own salvation ? It is the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted, whose souls pant after the land of Israel as the hart after the water-brooks. Let us help ourselves ; let us put our hands in our own pockets. With our *Groschen* let us rebuild Jerusalem and our holy Temple. We will collect a fund, slowly but surely ; from all parts of the East End and the provinces the pious will give. With the first-fruits we will send out a little party of persecuted Jews to Palestine, and then another and another. The movement will grow like a sliding snowball that becomes an avalanche.'

'Yes ; then the rich will come to you,' said Pinchas, intensely excited. 'Ah ! it is a great idea, like all yours. Yes, I will come—I will make a mighty speech, for my lips, like Isaiah's, have been touched with the burning coal. I will inspire all hearts to start the movement at once. I will write its "Marseillaise" this very night, bedewing my couch with a poet's tears. We shall no longer be dumb ; we shall roar like the lions of Lebanon. I shall be the trumpet to call the dispersed together from the four corners of the earth—yea, I shall be the Messiah himself !' said Pinchas, rising on the wings of

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his own eloquence, and forgetting to puff at his cigar.

'I rejoice to see you so ardent, but mention not the word Messiah, for I fear some of our friends will take alarm and say that these are not Messiah times, that neither Elias, nor Gog, King of Magog, nor any of the portents have yet appeared.—Kidneys or regents, my child?'

'Stupid people! Hillel said more wisely: "If I help not myself, who will help me?" Do they expect the Messiah to fall from heaven? Who knows but I am the Messiah? Was I not born on the ninth of Ab?'

'Hush, hush!' said Guedalyah the Greengrocer. 'Let us be practical. We are not yet ready for Marseillaises or Messiahs. The first step is to get funds enough to send one family to Palestine.'

'Yes, yes,' said Pinchas, drawing vigorously at his cigar to rekindle it. 'But we must look ahead. Already I see it all. Palestine in the hands of the Jews, the holy Temple rebuilt, a Jewish state, a president who is equally accomplished with the sword and the pen—the whole campaign stretches before me. I see things like Napoleon, general and dictator alike.'

'Truly, we wish that,' said the Greengrocer cautiously. 'But to-night it is only a ques-

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tion of a dozen men founding a collecting society.'

'Of course, of course; that I understand. You're right; people about here say Guedalyah the Greengrocer is always right. I will come beforehand to supper with you to talk it over, and you shall see what I will write for the *Mizpeh* and the *Arbeiter-freund*. You know, all these papers jump at me; their readers are the class to which you appeal; in them will I write my burning verses and leaders advocating the Cause. I shall be your Tyrtæus, your Mazzini, your Napoleon. How blessed that I came to England just now! I have lived in the Holy Land—the genius of the soil is blent with mine. I can describe its beauties as none other can. I am the very man at the very hour. And yet I will not go rashly—slow and sure—my plan is to collect small amounts from the poor, to start by sending one family at a time to Palestine. That is how we must do it. How does that strike you, Guedalyah? You agree?'

'Yes, yes. That is also my opinion.'

'You see, I am not a Napoleon only in great ideas. I understand detail, though as a poet I abhor it. Ah, the Jew is king of the world! He alone conceives great ideas, and executes them by petty means. The heathen are so stupid—so stupid! Yes, you shall see at supper

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how practically I will draw up the scheme. And then I will show you, too, what I have written about Gideon, M.P., the dog of a stockbroker —a satirical poem have I written about him in Hebrew—an acrostic with his name for the mockery of posterity. Stocks and shares have I translated into Hebrew, with new words which will at once be accepted by the Hebraists of the world and added to the vocabulary of modern Hebrew. Oh, I am terrible in satire! I sting like the hornet—witty as Immanuel, but mordant as his friend Dante. It will appear in the *Mizpeh* to-morrow. I will show this Anglo-Jewish community that I am a man to be reckoned with. I will crush it—not it me!'

'But they don't see the *Mizpeh*, and couldn't read it if they did.'

'No matter. I send it abroad — I have friends, great Rabbis, great scholars, everywhere, who send me their learned manuscripts, their commentaries, their ideas, for revision and improvement. Let the Anglo-Jewish community hug itself in its stupid prosperity, but I will make it the laughing-stock of Europe and Asia. Then some day it will find out its mistake; it will not have ministers like the Rev. Elkan Benjamin, who keeps four mistresses; it will depose the lump of flesh who

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reigns over it, and it will seize the hem of my coat and beseech me to be its Rabbi.'

'We should have a more orthodox Chief Rabbi certainly,' admitted Guedalyah.

'Orthodox? Then, and only then, shall we have true Judaism in London, and a burst of literary splendour far exceeding that of the much overpraised Spanish school, none of whom had that true lyrical gift which is like the carol of the bird in the pairing season. Oh, why have I not the bird's privileges as well as its gift of song? Why can I not pair at will? Oh, the stupid Rabbis who forbade polygamy! Verily as the verse says: "The law of Moses is perfect, enlightening the eyes" — marriage, divorce, all are regulated with the height of wisdom. Why must we adopt the stupid customs of the heathens? At present I have not even one mate. But I love—ah, Guedalyah! I love! The women are so beautiful! You love the women—hey?'

'I love my Rivkah,' said Guedalyah.—'A penny on each gingerbeer-bottle.'

'Yes; but why haven't *I* got a wife—eh?' demanded the little poet fiercely, his black eyes glittering. 'I am a fine, tall, well-built good-looking man. In Palestine and on the Continent all the girls would go about sighing and casting sheep's-eyes at me, for there the Jews love

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poetry and literature. But here! I can go into a room with a maiden in it, and she makes herself unconscious of my presence. There is Reb Shemuel's daughter, a fine beautiful virgin. I kiss her hand, and it is ice to my lips. Ah, if I only had money! And money I should have, if these English Jews were not so stupid, and if they elected me Chief Rabbi. Then I would marry—one, two, three maidens.'

'Talk not such foolishness!' said Guedalyah, laughing, for he thought the poet jested.

Pinchas saw his enthusiasm had carried him too far; but his tongue was the most reckless of organs, and often slipped into the truth. He was a real poet, with an extraordinary faculty for language, and a gift of unerring rhythm. He wrote after the mediæval model, with a profusion of acrostics and double-rhyming, not with the bald duplications of primitive Hebrew poetry. Intellectually he divined things like a woman, with marvellous rapidity, shrewdness and inaccuracy. He saw into people's souls through a dark refracting suspiciousness. The same bent of mind, the same individuality of distorted insight, made him overflow with ingenious explanations of the Bible and the Talmud, with new views and new lights on history, philology, medicine—anything, everything. And he believed in his ideas, because

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they were his, and in himself, because of his ideas. To himself his stature sometimes seemed to expand till his head touched the sun—but that was mostly after wine—and his brain retained a permanent glow from the contact.

'Well, peace be with you!' said Pinchas. 'I will leave you to your customers, who besiege you as I have been besieged by the maidens. But what you have just told me has gladdened my heart. I always had an affection for you, but now I love you like a woman. We will found this Holy Land League, I and you. You shall be president—I waive all claims in your favour—and I will be treasurer—hey?'

'We shall see—we shall see,' said Guedalyah the Greengrocer.

'No, we cannot leave it to the mob—we must settle it beforehand. Shall we say done?'

He laid his finger cajolingly to the side of his nose.

'We shall see,' repeated Guedalyah the Greengrocer impatiently.

'No; say! I love you like a brother. Grant me this favour, and I will never ask anything of you so long as I live.'

'Well, if the others——' began Guedalyah feebly.

'Ah! you are a prince in Israel,' Pinchas

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cried enthusiastically. 'If I could only show you my heart—how it loves you!'

He capered off at a sprightly trot, his head haloed by huge volumes of smoke. Guedalyah the Greengrocer bent over a bin of potatoes. Looking up suddenly, he was startled to see the head fixed in the open front of the shop-window. It was a narrow, dark-bearded face, distorted with an insinuative smile. A dirty-nailed forefinger was laid on the right of the nose.

'You won't forget?' said the head coaxingly.

'Of course I won't forget,' cried the Greengrocer querulously.

The meeting took place at ten that night at the Beth-Hamidrash founded by Guedalyah, a large unswept room, rudely fitted up as a synagogue, and approached by reeking staircases unsavoury as the neighbourhood. On one of the back benches a shabby youth with very long hair and lank fleshless limbs shook his body violently to and fro while he vociferated the sentences of the Mishnah in the traditional argumentative sing-song. Near the central raised platform was a group of enthusiasts, among whom Froom Karlkammer, with his thin, ascetic body and the mass of red hair that crowned his head like the light of a pharos, was a conspicuous figure.

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'Peace be to you, Karlkammer!' said Pinchas to him in Hebrew.

'To you be peace, Pinchas!' replied Karlkammer.

'Ah!' went on Pinchas, 'sweeter than honey it is to me—yea, than fine honey—to talk to a man in the Holy Tongue. Woe! the speakers are few in these latter days. I and thou, Karlkammer, are the only two people who can speak the Holy Tongue grammatically on this isle of the sea. Lo, it is a great thing we are met to do this night. I see Zion laughing on her mountains, and her fig-trees skipping for joy. I will be the treasurer of the fund, Karlkammer—do thou vote for me, for so our society shall flourish as the green bay-tree.'

Karlkammer grunted vaguely, not having humour enough to recall the usual associations of the simile, and Pinchas passed on to salute Hamburg. To Gabriel Hamburg Pinchas was occasion for half-respectful amusement. He could not but reverence the poet's genius, even while he laughed at his pretensions to omniscience, and at the daring and unscientific guesses which the poet offered as plain prose. For when in their arguments Pinchas came upon Jewish ground, he was in presence of a man who knew every inch of it.

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'Blessed art thou who arrivest!' he said when he perceived Pinchas. Then, dropping into German, he continued: 'I did not know you would join in the rebuilding of Zion.'

'Why not?' inquired Pinchas.

'Because you have written so many poems thereupon.'

'Be not so foolish,' said Pinchas, annoyed. 'Did not King David fight the Philistines as well as write the Psalms?'

'Did he write the Psalms?' said Hamburg quietly, with a smile.

'No, not so loud! Of course he didn't! The Psalms were written by Judas Maccabæus, as I proved in the last issue of the Stuttgard *Zeitschrift*. But that only makes my analogy more forcible. You shall see how I will gird on sword and armour, and I shall yet see even you in the forefront of the battle. I will be treasurer; you shall vote for me, Hamburg, for I and you are the only two people who know the Holy Tongue grammatically, and we must work shoulder to shoulder, and see that the balance-sheets are drawn up in the language of our fathers.'

In like manner did Melchitzedek Pinchas approach Hiram Lyons and Simon Gradkoski, the former a poverty-stricken pietist, who added day by day to a furlong of crabbed manuscript,

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embodying a useless commentary on the first chapter of Genesis ; the latter the portly fancy-goods dealer in whose warehouse Daniel Hyams was employed. Gradkoski rivalled Reb Shemuel in his knowledge of the exact loci of Talmudical remarks—page this and line that—and, secretly a tolerant latitudinarian, enjoyed the reputation of a bulwark of orthodoxy too well to give it up. Gradkoski passed easily from writing an invoice to writing a learned article on Hebrew astronomy. Pinchas ignored Joseph Strelitski, whose raven curl floated wildly over his forehead like a pirate's flag, though Hamburg, who was rather surprised to see the taciturn young man at a meeting, strove to draw him into conversation. The man to whom Pinchas ultimately attached himself was only a man in the sense of having attained his religious majority. He was a Harrow boy, named Raphael Leon, a scion of a wealthy family. The boy had manifested a strange premature interest in Jewish literature, and had often seen Gabriel Hamburg's name in learned footnotes, and discovering that he was in England, had just written to him. Hamburg had replied; they had met that day for the first time, and at the lad's own request the old scholar brought him on to this strange meeting. The boy grew to be Hamburg's one link with

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wealthy England, and though he rarely saw Leon again, the lad came in a shadowy way to take the place he had momentarily designed for Joseph Strelitski. To-night it was Pinchas who assumed the paternal manner, but he mingled it with a subtle obsequiousness that made the shy, simple lad uncomfortable, though when he came to read the poet's lofty sentiments, which arrived (with an acrostic dedication) by the first post next morning, he conceived an enthusiastic admiration for the neglected genius.

The rest of the 'remnant' that was met to save Israel looked more commonplace—a furrier, a slipper-maker, a locksmith, an ex-glazier (Mendel Hyams), a confectioner, a *Melammed*, or Hebrew teacher, a carpenter, a presser, a cigar-maker, a small shopkeeper or two, and, last and least, Moses Ansell. They were of many birthplaces—Austria, Holland, Poland, Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain—yet felt themselves of no country and of one. Encircled by the splendours of Modern Babylon, their hearts turned to the East like passion-flowers seeking the sun. Palestine, Jerusalem, Jordan, the Holy Land, were magic syllables to them; the sight of a coin struck on one of Baron Edmund's colonies filled their eyes with tears; in death they craved no higher boon than a

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handful of Palestine earth sprinkled over their graves.

But Guedalyah the Greengrocer was not the man to encourage idle hopes. He explained his scheme lucidly, without high falutin. They were to rebuild Judaism as the coral insect builds its reefs—not, as the prayer went, 'speedily and in our days.'

They had brought themselves up to expect more, and were disappointed. Some protested against peddling little measures; like Pinchas, they were for high, heroic deeds. Joseph Strelitski, student and cigar commission-agent, jumped to his feet and cried passionately in German: 'Everywhere Israel groans and travails—must we indeed wait and wait till our hearts are sick, and strike never a decisive blow? It is nigh two thousand years since across the ashes of our holy Temple we were driven into the Exile, clanking the chains of pagan conquerors. For nigh two thousand years have we dwelt on alien soils, a mockery and a byword for the nations, hounded out from every worthy employ and persecuted for turning to the unworthy, spat upon and trodden under foot, suffusing the scroll of history with our blood, and illuminating it with the lurid glare of the fires to which our martyrs have ascended gladly for the Sanctification of the

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Name. We, who twenty centuries ago were a mighty nation, with a law and a constitution and a religion which have been the key-notes of the civilization of the world, we who sat in judgment by the gates of great cities, clothed in purple and fine linen, are the sport of peoples who were then roaming wild in woods and marshes, clothed in the skins of the wolf and the bear. Now in the East there gleams again a star of hope, why shall we not follow it? Never has the chance of the Restoration flamed so high as to-day. Our capitalists rule the markets of Europe, our generals lead armies, our great men sit in the councils of every State. We are everywhere—a thousand thousand stray rivulets of power that could be blent into a mighty ocean. Palestine is one if we wish—the whole house of Israel has but to speak with a mighty unanimous voice. Poets will sing for us, journalists write for us, diplomatists haggle for us, millionaires pay the price for us. The Sultan would restore our land to us to-morrow, did we but essay to get it. There are no obstacles but ourselves. It is not the heathen that keep us out of our land—it is the Jews, the rich and prosperous Jews, Jeshurun grown fat and sleepy, dreaming the false dream of Assimilation with the people of the pleasant places in which their

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lines have been cast. Give us back our country; this alone will solve the Jewish question. Our paupers shall become agriculturists, and like Antæus, the genius of Israel shall gain fresh strength by contact with Mother Earth. And for England it will help to solve the Indian question. Between European Russia and India there will be planted a people fierce, terrible, hating Russia for her wild-beast deeds. And if we cannot buy it back with gold, we must buy it back with steel. Into the Exile we took with us, of all our glories, only a spark of the fire by which our Temple, the abode of our great One, was engirdled, and this little spark kept us alive while the towers of our enemies crumbled to dust, and this spark leapt into celestial flame, and shed light upon the faces of the heroes of our race, and inspired them to endure the horrors of the Dance of Death and the tortures of the *auto-da-fé*. Let us fan the spark again, till it leap up and become a pillar of flame, going before us and showing us the way to Jerusalem, the city of our sires. As the national poet of Israel, Naphtali Herz Imber, has so nobly sung.' Here he broke into the Hebrew *Wacht am Rhein*, of which an English version would run thus:

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THE WATCH ON THE JORDAN.

I.

Like the crash of the thunder
Which splitteth asunder
The flame of the cloud,
On our ears ever falling,
A voice is heard calling
From Zion aloud.
'Let your spirits' desires
For the land of your sires
Eternally burn.
From the foe to deliver
Our own holy river,
To Jordan return.'
Where the soft-flowing stream
Murmurs low as in dream,
There set we our watch!
Our watchword, 'The sword
Of our land and our Lord:'
By Jordan then set we our watch.

II.

Rest in peace, lovèd land,
For we rest not, but stand,
Off-shaken our sloth.
When the bolts of war rattle
To shirk not the battle,
We make thee our oath.
As we hope for a heaven,
Thy chains shall be riven,
Thine ensign unfurled.
And in pride of our race
We will fearlessly face
The might of the world.
When our trumpet is blown,
And our standard is flown,
Then set we our watch!
Our watchword, 'The sword
Of our land and our Lord:'
By Jordan then set we our watch.

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III.

Yea, as long as there be
Birds in air, fish in sea,
  And blood in our veins;
And the lions in might,
Leaping down from the height,
  Shake, roaring, their manes;
And the dew nightly laves
The forgotten old graves
  Where Judah's sires sleep,
We swear, who are living,
To rest not in striving,
  To pause not to weep.
Let the trumpet be blown,
Let the standard be flown,
  Now set we our watch!
Our watchword, 'The sword
Of our land and our Lord:'
In Jordan NOW set we our watch.

He sank upon the rude wooden bench, exhausted, his eyes glittering, his raven hair dishevelled by the wildness of his gestures. He had said. For the rest of the evening he neither moved nor spake. The calm, good-humoured tones of Simon Gradkoski followed like a cold shower.

'We must be sensible,' he said, for he enjoyed the reputation of a shrewd conciliatory man of the world as well as of a pillar of orthodoxy. 'The great people will come to us, but not if we abuse them. We must flatter them up, and tell them they are the descendants of the Maccabees. There is much political kudos to be got out of leading such a move-

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ment; this, too, they will see. Rome was not built in a day, and the Temple will not be rebuilt in a year. Besides, we are not soldiers now. We must recapture our land by brain, not sword. Slow and sure, and the blessing of God over all.'

After such wise Simon Gradkoski. But Gronovitz, the Hebrew teacher, crypto-atheist and overt revolutionary, who read a Hebrew edition of the 'Pickwick Papers' in synagogue on the Day of Atonement, was with Joseph Strelitski, and a bigot whose religion made his wife and children wretched was with the cautious Simon Gradkoski. Froom Karlkammer followed, but his drift was uncertain. He apparently looked forward to miraculous interpositions. Still, he approved of the movement from one point of view. The more Jews lived in Jerusalem, the more would be enabled to die there, which was the aim of a good Jew's life. As for the Messiah, he would come assuredly 'in God's good time.' Thus Karlkammer at enormous length, with frequent intervals of unintelligibility and huge chunks of irrelevant quotation and much play of cabalistic conceptions. Pinchas, who had been fuming throughout this speech, for to him Karlkammer stood for the archetype of all donkeys, jumped up impatiently when Karl-

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kammer paused for breath, and then denounced as an interruption that gentleman's indignant continuance of his speech. The sense of the meeting was with the poet, and Karlkammer was silenced. Pinchas was dithyrambic, sublime, with audacities which only genius can venture on. He was pungently merry over Imber's pretensions to be the National Poet of Israel, declaring that his prosody, his vocabulary, and even his grammar, were beneath contempt. He, Pinchas, would write Judea a real patriotic poem, which should be sung from the slums of Whitechapel to the *veldts* of South Africa, and from the *Mellah* of Morocco to the Judengassen of Germany, and should gladden the hearts and break from the mouths of the poor immigrants saluting the statue of Liberty in New York harbour. When he, Pinchas, walked in Victoria Park of a Sunday afternoon and heard the band play, the sound of the cornet always seemed to him, said he, like the sound of Bar Cochba's trumpet calling the warriors to battle. And when it was all over, and the band played 'God save the Queen,' it sounded like the pæan of victory when he marched, a conqueror, to the gates of Jerusalem. Wherefore he, Pinchas, would be their leader. Had not the Providence which concealed so many revela-

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tions in the letters of the Torah given him the name Melchitzedek Pinchas, whereof one initial stood for Messiah and the other for Palestine? Yes, he would be their Messiah. But money nowadays was the sinews of war, and the first step to Messiahship was the keeping of the funds. The Redeemer must in the first instance be the treasurer. With this anti-climax Pinchas wound up, his childishness and *naïveté* conquering his cunning.

Other speakers followed, but in the end Guedalyah the Greengrocer prevailed. They appointed him President, and Simon Gradkoski Treasurer, collecting twenty-five shillings on the spot, ten from the lad Raphael Leon. In vain Pinchas reminded the President they would need Collectors to make house to house calls; three other members were chosen to trisect the Ghetto. All felt the incongruity of hanging money-bags at the saddle-bow of Pegasus. Whereupon Pinchas re-lit his cigar, and, muttering that they were all fool-men, betook himself unceremoniously without.

Gabriel Hamburg looked on throughout with something like a smile on his shrivelled features. Once while Joseph Strelitski was holding forth he blew his nose violently. Perhaps he had taken too large a pinch of snuff. But not a word did the great scholar speak. He would

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give up his last breath to promote the Return (provided the Hebrew manuscripts were not left behind in alien museums); but the humours of the enthusiasts were part of the great comedy in the only theatre he cared for. Mendel Hyams was another silent member. But he wept openly under Strelitski's harangue.

When the meeting adjourned, the lank unhealthy, swaying creature in the corner, who had been mumbling the tractate Baba Kama out of courtesy, now burst out afresh in his quaint argumentative recitative:

'What, then, does it refer to? To his stone, or his knife, or his burden, which he has left on the highway, and it injured a passer-by. How is this? If he gave up his ownership thereof, whether according to Rav or according to Shemuel, it is a pit, and if he retained his ownership, if according to Shemuel, who holds that all are derived from "his pit," then it is "a pit." And if according to Rav, who holds that all are derived from "his ox," then it is "an ox," therefore the derivatives of "an ox" are the same as "an ox" itself.'

He had been at it all day, and he went on far into the small hours, shaking his body backwards and forwards without remission.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE COURTSHIP OF SHOSSHI SHMENDRIK.

MECKISH was a Chassid, which in the vernacular is a saint, but in the actual a member of the sect of the Chassidim, whose centre is Galicia. In the eighteenth century Israel Baalshem, 'the Master of the Name,' retired to the mountains to meditate on philosophical truths. He arrived at a creed of cheerful and even stoical acceptance of the cosmos in all its aspects, and a conviction that the incense of an enjoyed pipe was grateful to the Creator. But it is the inevitable misfortune of religious founders to work apocryphal miracles, and to raise up an army of disciples who squeeze the teaching of their master into their own mental moulds, and are ready to die for the resultant distortion. It is only by being misunderstood that a great man can have any influence upon his kind. Baalshem was succeeded by an

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army of thaumaturgists, and the wonder-working Rabbis of Sadagora, who are in touch with all the spirits of the air, enjoy the revenue of princes and the reverence of popes. To snatch a morsel of such a Rabbi's sabbath *Kuggol*, or pudding, is to ensure paradise, and the scramble is a scene to witness. Chassidism is the extreme expression of Jewish optimism. The Chassidim are the Corybantes or Salvationists of Judaism. In England their idiosyncrasies are limited to noisy jubilant services in their *Chevrah*, the worshippers dancing, or leaning, or standing, or writhing, or beating their heads against the wall as they will, and playing like happy children in the presence of their Father.

Meckish also danced at home and sang 'Tiddy, riddy, roi, toi, toi, toi, ta,' varied by 'Rom, pom, pom' and 'Bim-bom' in a quaint melody, to express his personal satisfaction with existence. He was a weazened little widower with a deep yellow complexion, prominent cheek-bones, a hook nose, and a scrubby, straggling little beard. Years of professional practice as a mendicant had stamped his face with an anguished, suppliant, conciliatory grin, which he could not now erase even after business hours. It might, perhaps, have yielded to soap and water, but the experiment had not been tried. On his head he always wore a

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fur cap, with lappets for his ears. Across his shoulders was strung a lemon-basket filled with grimy, gritty bits of sponge, which nobody ever bought. Meckish's merchandise was quite other. He dealt in sensational spectacle. As he shambled along with extreme difficulty and by the aid of a stick, his lower limbs, which were crossed in odd contortions, appeared half paralyzed, and when his strange appearance had attracted attention, his legs would give way, and he would find himself with his back on the pavement, where he waited to be picked up by sympathetic spectators shedding silver and copper. After an indefinite number of performances, Meckish would hurry home in the darkness, to dance and sing 'Tiddy, riddy, roi, toi, Bim-bom.'

Thus Meckish lived at peace with God and man, till one day the fatal thought came into his head that he wanted a second wife. There was no difficulty in getting one—by the aid of his friend, Sugarman the Shadchan—and soon the little man found his household goods increased by the possession of a fat Russian giantess. Meckish did not call in the authorities to marry him; he had a 'still wedding,' which cost nothing. An artificial canopy, made out of a sheet and four broomsticks, was erected in the chimney-corner, and nine male friends

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sanctified the ceremony by their presence. Meckish and the Russian giantess fasted on their wedding-morn, and everything was in honourable order.

But Meckish's happiness and economies were short-lived. The Russian giantess turned out a Tartar. She got her claws into his savings, and decorated herself with Paisley shawls and gold necklaces. Nay, more! She insisted that Meckish must give her 'society,' and keep open house. Accordingly the bed-sitting-room which they rented was turned into a salon of reception, and hither one Friday night came Peleg Shmendrik and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Sugarman. Over the Sabbath meal the current of talk divided itself into masculine and feminine freshets. The ladies discussed bonnets, and the gentlemen Talmud. All the three men dabbled, pettily enough, in stocks and shares, but nothing in the world would tempt them to transact any negotiation or discuss the merits of a prospectus on the Sabbath, though they were all fluttered by the allurements of the Sapphire Mines, Limited, as set forth in a whole page of advertisement in the *Jewish Chronicle*, the organ naturally perused for its religious news on Friday evenings. The share-list would close at noon on Monday.

'But when Moses, our teacher, struck the

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rock,' said Peleg Shmendrik, in the course of the discussion, 'he was right the first time, but wrong the second, because, as the Talmud points out, a child may be chastised when it is little, but as it grows up it should be reasoned with.'

'Yes,' said Sugarman the Shadchan quickly; 'but if his rod had not been made of sapphire he would have split that instead of the rock.'

'Was it made of sapphire?' asked Meckish, who was rather a Man-of-the-Earth.

'Of course it was, and a very fine thing, too,' answered Sugarman.

'Do you think so?' inquired Peleg Shmendrik eagerly.

'The sapphire is a magic stone,' answered Sugarman. 'It improves the vision, and makes peace between foes. Issachar, the studious son of Jacob, was represented on the breastplate by the sapphire. Do you not know that the mist-like centre of the sapphire symbolizes the cloud that enveloped Sinai at the giving of the Law?'

'I did not know that,' answered Peleg Shmendrik; 'but I know that Moses's rod was created in the twilight of the first Sabbath, and God did everything after that with this sceptre.'

'Ah, but we are not all strong enough to

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wield Moses's rod; it weighs forty seahs,' said Sugarman.

'How many seahs do you think one could carry safely?' asked Meckish.

'Five or six seahs—not more,' said Sugarman. 'You see, one might drop them if he attempted more, and even sapphire may break. The first Tables of the Law were made of sapphire, and yet from a great height they fell terribly, and were shattered to pieces.'

'Gideon the M.P. may be said to desire a rod of Moses, for his secretary told me he will take forty,' said Shmendrik.

'Hush! what are you saying?' cried Sugarman. 'Gideon is a rich man; and, then, he is a director.'

'It seems a good lot of directors,' said Meckish.

'Good to look at. But who can tell?' said Sugarman, shaking his head. 'The Queen of Sheba probably brought sapphires to Solomon, but she was not a virtuous woman.'

'Ah, Solomon!' sighed Mrs. Shmendrik, pricking up her ears, and interrupting this talk of stocks and stones. 'If he'd had a thousand daughters instead of a thousand wives, even his Treasury couldn't have held out. I had only two girls—praised be He!—and yet it nearly ruined me to buy them

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husbands. A dirty *Greener* comes over, without a shirt to his skin, and forsooth nothing else but he must have two hundred pounds in the hand. And then you've got to stick to his back to see that he doesn't take his breeches in his hand and off to America. In Poland he would have been glad to get a maiden, and would have said "Thank you."'

'Well, but what about your own son?' said Sugarman. 'Why haven't you asked me to find Shosshi a wife? It's a sin against the maidens of Israel. He must be long past the Talmudical age.'

'He is twenty-four,' said Peleg Shmendrik.

'Tu, tu, tu, tu, tu!' said Sugarman, clacking his tongue in horror. 'Have you, perhaps, an objection to his marrying?'

'Save us and grant us peace!' cried the father in deprecatory horror. 'Only Shosshi is so shy. You are aware, too, he is not handsome. Heaven alone knows whom he takes after!'

'Peleg, I blush for you!' said Mrs. Shmendrik. 'What is the matter with the boy? Is he deaf, dumb, blind, unprovided with legs? If Shosshi is backward with the women, it is because he "learns" so hard when he's not at work. He earns a good living by his cabinet-making, and it is quite time he set up a Jewish

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household for himself. How much will you want for finding him a *Calloh?*'

'Hush!' said Sugarman sternly. 'Do you forget it is the Sabbath? Be assured I shall not charge more than last time, unless the bride has an extra good dowry.'

On Saturday night, immediately after *Havdalah*, Sugarman went to Mr. Belcovitch, who was just about to resume work, and informed him he had the very *Chosan* for Becky.

'I know,' he said, 'Becky has a lot of young men after her, but what are they but a pack of bare-backs? How much dowry will you give for a solid man?'

After much haggling, Belcovitch consented to give twenty pounds immediately before the marriage ceremony, and another twenty at the end of twelve months.

'But no pretending you haven't got it about you when we're at the *Shool*, no asking us to wait till we get home,' said Sugarman, 'or else I withdraw my man, even from under the *Chuppah* itself. When shall I bring him for your inspection?'

'Oh, to-morrow afternoon—Sunday—when Becky will be out in the park with her young men. It's best I shall see him first.'

Sugarman now regarded Shosshi as a married man. He rubbed his hands and went to see

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him. He found him in a little shed in the back-yard, where he did extra work at home. Shosshi was busy completing little wooden articles—stools and wooden spoons and money-boxes—for sale in Petticoat Lane next day. He supplemented his wages that way.

'Good-evening, Shossi,' said Sugarman.

'Good-evening,' murmured Shosshi, sawing away.

Shosshi was a gawky young man, with a blotched, sandy face, ever ready to blush deeper with the suspicion that conversations going on at a distance were all about him. His eyes were shifty and cat-like; one shoulder over-balanced the other, and when he walked he swayed loosely to and fro. Sugarman was rarely remiss in the offices of piety, and he was nigh murmuring the prayer at the sight of monstrosities: 'Blessed art Thou who variest the creatures.' But, resisting the temptation, he said aloud:

'I have something to tell you.'

Shosshi looked up suspiciously.

'Don't bother; I am busy,' he said, and applied his plane to the leg of a stool.

'But this is more important than stools. How would you like to get married?'

Shosshi's face became like a peony.

'Don't make laughter,' he said.

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'But I mean it. You are twenty-four years old, and ought to have a wife and four children by this time.'

'But I don't want a wife and four children,' said Shosshi.

'No, of course not. I don't mean a widow. It is a maiden I have in my eye.'

'Nonsense! what maiden would have me?' said Shosshi, a note of eagerness mingling with the diffidence of the words.

'What maiden? *Gott in Himmel!* A hundred! A fine, strong, healthy young man like you, who can make a good living!'

Shosshi put down his plane and straightened himself. There was a moment of silence. Then his frame collapsed again into a limp mass. His head drooped over his left shoulder.

'This is all foolishness you talk. The maidens make mock.'

'Be not a piece of clay! I know a maiden who has you quite in affection.'

The blush which had waned mantled in a full flood. Shosshi stood breathless, gazing, half suspiciously, half credulously, at his strictly honourable Mephistopheles.

It was about seven o'clock, and the moon was a yellow crescent in the frosty heavens. The sky was punctured with clear-cut constella-

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tions. The back-yard looked poetic with its blend of shadow and moonlight.

'A beautiful fine maid,' said Sugarman ecstatically, 'with pink cheeks and black eyes and forty pounds dowry.'

The moon sailed smilingly along. The water was running into the cistern with a soothing, peaceful sound. Shosshi consented to go and see Mr. Belcovitch.

Mr. Belcovitch made no parade. Everything was as usual. On the wooden table were two halves of squeezed lemons, a piece of chalk, two cracked cups, and some squashed soap. He was not overwhelmed by Shosshi, but admitted he was solid. His father was known to be pious, and both his sisters had married reputable men. Above all, he was not a Dutchman. Shosshi left No. 1, Royal Street, Belcovitch's accepted son-in-law. Esther met him on the stairs, and noticed the radiance on his pimply countenance. He walked with his head almost erect. Shosshi was indeed very much in love, and felt that all that was needed for his happiness was a sight of his future wife.

But he had no time to go and see her except on Sunday afternoons, and then she was always out. Mrs. Belcovitch, however, made amends by paying him considerable attention. The sickly-looking little woman chatted to him for

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hours at a time about her ailments, and invited him to taste her medicine, which was a compliment Mrs. Belcovitch passed only to her most esteemed visitors. By-and-by she even wore her nightcap in his presence, as a sign that he had become one of the family. Under this encouragement Shosshi grew confidential, and imparted to his future mother-in-law the details of his mother's disabilities. But he could mention nothing which Mrs. Belcovitch could not cap, for she was a woman extremely catholic in her maladies. She was possessed of considerable imagination, and once when Fanny selected a bonnet for her in a milliner's window, the girl had much difficulty in persuading her it was not inferior to what turned out to be the reflection of itself in a side mirror.

'I'm so weak upon my legs,' she would boast to Shosshi. 'I was born with ill-matched legs. One is a thick one and one is a thin one. And so one goes about.'

Shosshi expressed his sympathetic admiration, and the courtship proceeded apace. Sometimes Fanny and Pesach Weingott would be at home working, and they were very affable to him. He began to lose something of his shyness and his lurching gait, and he quite looked forward to his weekly visit to the Belcovitches. It was the story of Cymon and Iphigenia over

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again. Love improved even his powers of conversation, for when Belcovitch held forth at length, Shosshi came in several times with 'So?' and sometimes in the right place. Mr. Belcovitch loved his own voice, and listened to it, the arrested press-iron in his hand. Occasionally, in the middle of one of his harangues, it would occur to him that someone was talking and wasting time, and then he would say to the room, 'Shah! make an end, make an end!' and dry up. But to Shosshi he was especially polite, rarely interrupting himself when his son-in-law-elect was hanging on his words. There was an intimate, tender tone about these causeries.

'I should like to drop down dead suddenly,' he would say with the air of a philosopher who had thought it all out. 'I shouldn't care to lie up in bed and mess about with medicine and doctors. To make a long job of dying is so expensive.'

'So?' said Shosshi.

'Don't worry, Bear! I dare say the devil will seize you suddenly,' interposed Mrs. Belcovitch dryly.

'It will not be the devil,' said Mr. Belcovitch confidently, and in a confidential manner. 'If I had died as a young man, Shosshi, it might have been different.'

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Shosshi pricked up his ears to listen to the tale of Bear's wild cubhood.

'One morning,' said Belcovitch, 'in Poland, I got up at four o'clock to go to Supplications for Forgiveness. The air was raw, and there was no sign of dawn. Suddenly I noticed a black pig trotting behind me. I quickened my pace, and the black pig did likewise. I broke into a run, and I heard the pig's paws patting furiously upon the hard frozen ground. A cold sweat broke out all over me. I looked over my shoulder, and saw the pig's eyes burning like red-hot coals in the darkness. Then I knew that the Not-Good One was after me. "Hear, O Israel!" I cried. I looked up to the heavens, but there was a cold mist covering the stars. Faster and faster I flew, and faster and faster flew the demon-pig. At last the *Shool* came in sight. I made one last wild effort, and fell exhausted upon the holy threshold, and the pig vanished.'

'So?' said Shosshi, with a long breath.

'Immediately after *Shool* I spake with the Rabbi, and he said, "Bear, are thy *Tephillin* in order?" So I said, "Yea, Rabbi; they are very large, and I bought them of the pious scribe, Naphtali, and I look to the knots weekly." But he said, "I will examine them." So I brought them to him, and he opened the

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head-phylactery, and, lo! in place of the holy parchment he found breadcrumbs.'

'Hoi, hoi!' said Shosshi in horror, his red hands quivering.

'Yes,' said Bear mournfully, 'I had worn them for ten years; and, moreover, the leaven had defiled all my Passovers.'

Belcovitch also entertained the lover with details of the internal politics of the Sons of the Covenant.

Shosshi's affection for Becky increased weekly under the stress of these intimate conversations with her family. At last his passion was rewarded, and Becky, at the violent instance of her father, consented to disappoint one of her young men and to stay at home to meet her future husband. She put off her consent till after dinner, though, and it began to rain immediately before she gave it.

The moment Shosshi came into the room he divined that a change had come over the spirit of the dream. Out of the corners of his eyes he caught a glimpse of an appalling beauty standing behind a sewing-machine. His face fired up, his legs began to quiver, he wished the ground would open and swallow him as it did Korah.

'Becky,' said Mr. Belcovitch, 'this is Mr. Shosshi Shmendrik.'

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Shosshi put on a sickly grin, and nodded his head affirmatively, as if to corroborate the statement, and the round felt hat he wore slid back till the broad brim rested on his ears. Through a sort of mist, a terribly fine maid loomed.

Becky stared at him haughtily and curled her lip. Then she giggled.

Shosshi held out his huge red hand limply. Becky took no notice of it.

'*Nu*, Becky!' breathed Belcovitch, in a whisper that could have been heard across the way.

'How are you? All right?' said Becky very loud, as if she thought deafness was among Shosshi's disadvantages.

Shosshi grinned reassuringly.

There was another silence.

Shosshi wondered whether the *convenances* would permit him to take his leave now. He did not feel comfortable at all. Everything had been going so delightfully, it had been quite a pleasure to him to come to the house. But now all was changed. The course of true love never does run smooth, and the advent of this new personage into the courtship was distinctly embarrassing.

The father came to the rescue.

'A little rum?' he said.

'Yes,' said Shosshi.

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'Chayah! *Nu.* Fetch the bottle.'

Mrs. Belcovitch went to the chest of drawers in the corner of the room and took from the top of it a large decanter. She then produced two glasses without feet, and filled them with the home-made rum, handing one to Shosshi and the other to her husband. Shosshi muttered a blessing over it, then he leered vacuously at the company and cried, 'To life!'

'To peace!' replied the older man, gulping down the spirit.

Shosshi was doing the same when his eye caught Becky's. He choked for five minutes, Mrs. Belcovitch thumping him maternally on the back. When he was comparatively recovered, the sense of his disgrace rushed upon him and overwhelmed him afresh. Becky was still giggling behind the sewing-machine. Once more Shosshi felt that the burden of the conversation was upon him. He looked at his boots, and not seeing anything there, looked up again and grinned encouragingly at the company, as if to waive his rights. But finding the company did not respond, he blew his nose enthusiastically, as a lead-off to the conversation.

Mr. Belcovitch saw his embarrassment, and, making a sign to Chayah, slipped out of the room, followed by his wife. Shosshi was left alone with the terribly fine maid.

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Becky stood still, humming a little air and looking up at the ceiling, as if she had forgotten Shosshi's existence. With her eyes in that position it was easier for Shosshi to look at her. He stole side-long glances at her, which, growing bolder and bolder, at length fused into an uninterrupted steady gaze.

How fine and beautiful she was! His eyes began to glitter; a smile of approbation overspread his face. Suddenly she looked down and their eyes met. Shosshi's smile hurried off and gave way to a sickly, sheepish look, and his legs felt weak. The terribly fine maid gave a kind of snort, and resumed her inspection of the ceiling. Gradually Shosshi found himself examining her again. Verily Sugarman had spoken truly of her charms. But—overwhelming thought!—had not Sugarman also said she loved him? Shosshi knew nothing of the ways of girls, except what he had learned from the Talmud. Quite possibly Becky was now occupied in expressing ardent affection. He shuffled towards her, his heart beating violently. He was near enough to touch her. The air she was humming throbbed in his ears. He opened his mouth to speak—Becky, becoming suddenly aware of his proximity, fixed him with a basilisk glare—the words were frozen on his lips. For some

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seconds his mouth remained open, then the ridiculousness of shutting it again without speaking spurred him on to make some sound, however meaningless. He made a violent effort, and there burst from his lips in Hebrew:

'"Happy are those who dwell in Thy house; ever shall they praise Thee—Selah!"' It was not a compliment to Becky. Shosshi's face lit up with joyous relief. By some inspiration he had started the afternoon prayer. He felt that Becky would understand the pious necessity. With fervent gratitude to the Almighty he continued the Psalm: 'Happy are the people whose lot is thus,' etc. Then he turned his back on Becky, with his face to the east wall, made three steps forwards and commenced the silent delivery of the *Amidah*. Usually he gabbled off the 'Eighteen Blessings' in five minutes. To-day they were prolonged till he heard the footsteps of the returning parents. Then he scurried through the relics of the service at lightning speed. When Mr. and Mrs. Belcovitch re-entered the room, they saw by his happy face that all was well, and made no opposition to his instant departure.

He came again the next Sunday, and was rejoiced to find that Becky was out, though he had hoped to find her in. The courtship made great strides that afternoon, Mr. and Mrs.

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Belcovitch being more amiable than ever, to compensate for Becky's private refusal to entertain the addresses of such a *Shmuck*. There had been sharp domestic discussions during the week, and Becky had only sniffed at her parents' commendations of Shosshi as a 'very worthy youth.' She declared that it was 'remission of sins merely to look at him.'

Next Sabbath Mr. and Mrs. Belcovitch paid a formal visit to Shosshi's parents to make their acquaintance, and partook of tea and cake. Becky was not with them; moreover, she defiantly declared she would never be at home on a Sunday till Shosshi was married. They circumvented her by getting him up on a weekday. The image of Becky had been so often in his thoughts now, that by the time he saw her the second time he was quite habituated to her appearance. He had even imagined his arm round her waist, but in practice he found he could go no further as yet than ordinary conversation.

Becky was sitting sewing buttonholes when Shosshi arrived. Everybody was there, Mr. Belcovitch pressing coats with hot irons; Fanny shaking the room with her heavy machine; Pesach Weingott cutting a piece of chalk-marked cloth; Mrs. Belcovitch carefully pouring out tablespoonfuls of medicine. There

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were even some outside 'hands,' work being unusually plentiful, as from the manifestoes of Simon Wolf, the labour-leader, the slop manufacturers anticipated a strike.

Sustained by their presence, Shosshi felt a bold and gallant wooer. He determined that this time he would not go without having addressed at least one remark to the object of his affections. Grinning amiably at the company generally, by way of salutation, he made straight for Becky's corner. The terribly fine lady snorted at the sight of him, divining that she had been out-manœuvred. Belcovitch surveyed the situation out of the corners of his eyes, not pausing a moment in his task.

'*Nu*, how goes it, Becky?' Shosshi murmured.

Becky said:

'All right; how are you?'

'God be thanked, I have nothing to complain of,' said Shosshi, encouraged by the warmth of his welcome. 'My eyes are rather weak still, though much better than last year.'

Becky made no reply, so Shosshi continued:

'But my mother is always a sick person. She has to swallow bucketfuls of cod-liver-oil. She cannot be long for this world.'

'Nonsense, nonsense!' put in Mrs. Belcovitch, appearing suddenly behind the lovers. 'My

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children's children shall never be any worse; it's all fancy with her, she coddles herself too much.'

'Oh no, she says she's much worse than you,' Shosshi blurted out, turning round to face his future mother-in-law.

'Oh, indeed!' said Chayah angrily. 'My enemies shall have my maladies! If your mother had my health, she would be lying in bed with it. But I go about in a sick condition. I can hardly crawl around. Look at my legs; has your mother got such legs? One a thick one, and one a thin one.'

Shosshi grew scarlet; he felt he had blundered. It was the first real shadow on his courtship, perhaps the little rift within the lute. He turned back to Becky for sympathy. There was no Becky. She had taken advantage of the conversation to slip away. He found her again in a moment, though, at the other end of the room. She was seated before a machine. He crossed the room boldly and bent over her.

'Don't you feel cold, working?'

Br-r-r-r-r-r-h!

It was the machine turning. Becky had set the treadle going madly, and was pushing a piece of cloth under the needle. When she paused, Shosshi said:

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'Have you heard Reb Shemuel preach? He told a very amusing allegory last——'

Br-r-r-r-r-r-h!

Undaunted, Shosshi recounted the amusing allegory at length, and as the noise of her machine prevented Becky hearing a word, she found his conversation endurable. After several more monologues, accompanied on the machine by Becky, Shosshi took his departure in high feather, promising to bring up specimens of his handiwork for her edification.

On his next visit, he arrived with his arms laden with choice morsels of carpentry. He laid them on the table for her admiration.

They were odd knobs and rockers for Polish cradles! The pink of Becky's cheeks spread all over her face like a blot of red ink on a piece of porous paper. Shosshi's face reflected the colour in even more ensanguined dyes. Becky rushed from the room, and Shosshi heard her giggling madly on the staircase. It dawned upon him that he had displayed bad taste in his selection.

'What have you done to my child?' Mrs. Belcovitch inquired.

'N-n-othing,' he stammered; 'I only brought her some of my work to see.'

'And is this what one shows to a young girl?' demanded the mother indignantly.

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'They are only bits of cradles,' said Shosshi deprecatingly. 'I thought she would like to see what nice workmanly things I turned out. See how smoothly these rockers are carved! Here is a thick one, and there is a thin one!'

'Ah, shameless droll! dost thou make mock of my legs too?' said Mrs. Belcovitch. 'Out, impudent face, out with thee!'

Shosshi gathered up his specimens in his arms and fled through the door. Becky was still in hilarious eruption outside. The sight of her made confusion worse confounded. The knobs and rockers rolled thunderously down the stairs; Shosshi stumbled after them, picking them up on his course, and wishing himself dead.

All Sugarman's strenuous efforts to patch up the affair failed. Shosshi went about broken-hearted for several days. To have been so near the goal, and then not to arrive after all! What made failure more bitter was that he had boasted of his conquest to his acquaintances, especially to the two who kept the stalls to the right and left of him on Sundays in Petticoat Lane. They made a butt of him as it was; he felt he could never stand between them for a whole morning now, and have Attic salt put upon his wounds. He shifted his position, arranging to pay sixpence a time for

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the privilege of fixing himself outside Widow Finkelstein's shop, which stood at the corner of a street and might be presumed to intercept two streams of pedestrians. Widow Finkelstein's shop was a chandler's, and she did a large business in farthing-worths of boiling water. There was thus no possible rivalry between her ware and Shosshi's, which consisted of wooden candlesticks, little rocking-chairs, stools, ash-trays, etc., piled up artistically on a barrow.

But Shosshi's luck had gone with the change of locus. His clientèle went to the old spot, but did not find him. He did not even make a hansel. At two o'clock he tied his articles to the barrow with a complicated arrangement of cords. Widow Finkelstein waddled out and demanded her sixpence. Shosshi replied that he had not taken sixpence, that the coigne was not one of vantage. Widow Finkelstein stood up for her rights, and even hung on to the barrow for them. There was a short sharp argument, a simultaneous jabbering as of a pair of monkeys. Shosshi Shmendrik's pimply face worked with excited expostulation; Widow Finkelstein's cushion-like countenance was agitated by waves of righteous indignation. Suddenly Shosshi darted between the shafts and made a dash off with the barrow down the

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side street. But Widow Finkelstein pressed it down with all her force, arresting the motion like a drag. Incensed by the laughter of the spectators, Shosshi put forth all his strength at the shafts, jerked the widow off her feet, and see-sawed her skywards, huddled up spherically like a balloon, but clinging as grimly as ever to the defalcating barrow. Then Shosshi started off at a run, the carpentry rattling, and the dead weight of his living burden making his muscles ache.

Right to the end of the street he dragged her, pursued by a hooting crowd. Then he stopped, worn out.

'Will you give me that sixpence, you *gonof?*'

'No, I haven't got it. You'd better go back to your shop, else you'll suffer from worse thieves.'

It was true. Widow Finkelstein smote her wig in horror, and hurried back to purvey treacle.

But that night when she had put up the shutters she hurried off to Shosshi's address, which she had learnt in the interim. His little brother opened the door and said Shosshi was in the shed.

He was just nailing the thicker of those rockers on to the body of a cradle. His soul was full of bitter-sweet memories. Widow

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Finkelstein suddenly appeared in the moonlight. For a moment Shosshi's heart beat wildly. He thought the buxom figure was Becky's.

'I have come for my sixpence!'

Ah! The words awoke him from his dream. It was only the Widow Finkelstein.

And yet—— Verily the Widow, too, was plump and agreeable. If only her errand had been pleasant, Shosshi felt she might have brightened his back-yard. He had been moved to his depths latterly, and a new tenderness and a new boldness towards women shone in his eyes.

He rose and put his head on one side and smiled amiably, and said:

'Be not so foolish. I did not take a copper. I am a poor young man. You have plenty of money in your stocking.'

'How know you that?' said the widow, stretching forward her right foot meditatively, and gazing at the strip of stocking revealed.

'Never mind,' said Shosshi, shaking his head sapiently.

'Well, it is true,' she admitted. 'I have two hundred and seventeen golden sovereigns besides my shop. But for all that, why should you keep my sixpence?' She asked it with the same good-humoured smile.

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The logic of that smile was unanswerable. Shosshi's mouth opened, but no sound issued from it. He did not even say the evening prayer. The moon sailed slowly across the heavens. The water flowed into the cistern with a soft soothing sound.

Suddenly it occurred to Shosshi that the Widow's waist was not very unlike that which he had engirdled imaginatively. He thought he would just try if the sensation was anything like what he had fancied. His arm strayed timidly round her black-beaded mantle. The sense of his audacity was delicious. He was wondering whether he ought to say *She-hechyoni*—the prayer over a new pleasure. But the Widow Finkelstein stopped his mouth with a kiss. After that Shosshi forgot his pious instincts.

Except Mrs. Ansell, Sugarman was the only person scandalized. Shosshi's irrepressible spirit of romance had robbed him of his commission. But Meckish danced with Shosshi Shmendrik at the wedding, while the *Calloh* footed it with the Russian giantess. The men danced in one half of the room, the women in the other.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE HYAMSES' HONEYMOON.

'BEENAH, hast thou heard aught about our Daniel?'

There was a note of anxiety in old Hyams's voice.

'Naught, Mendel.'

'Thou hast not heard talk of him and Sugarman's daughter?'

'No; is there aught between them?'

The listless old woman spoke a little eagerly.

'Only that a man told me that his son saw our Daniel pay court to the maiden.'

'Where?'

'At the Purim ball.'

'The man is a fool; a youth must dance with some maiden or the other.'

Miriam came in, fagged out from teaching. Old Hyams dropped from Yiddish into English.

'You are right. He must.'

Beenah replied in her slow painful English:

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'Would he not have told us?'

Mendel repeated:

'Would he not have told us?'

Each avoided the other's eye. Beenah dragged herself about the room, laying Miriam's tea.

'Mother, I wish you wouldn't scrape your feet along the floor so. It gets on my nerves, and I *am* so worn out. Would he not have told you what? And who's he?'

Beenah looked at her husband.

'I heard Daniel was engaged,' said old Hyams jerkily.

Miriam started and flushed.

'To whom?' she cried in excitement.

'Bessie Sugarman.'

'Sugarman's daughter?' Miriam's voice was pitched high.

'Yes.'

Miriam's voice rose to a higher pitch

'Sugarman the Shadchan's daughter?'

'Yes.'

Miriam burst into a fit of incredulous laughter.

'As if Daniel would marry into a miserable family like that.'

'It is as good as ours,' said Mendel, with white lips.

His daughter looked at him, astonished.

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'I thought your children had taught you more self-respect than that,' she said quietly. 'Mr. Sugarman is a nice person to be related to!'

'At home Mrs. Sugarman's family was highly respected,' quavered old Hyams.

'We are not at home now,' said Miriam witheringly; 'we're in England. A bad-tempered old hag!'

'That is what she thinks me,' thought Mrs. Hyams, but she said nothing.

'Did you not see Daniel with her at the ball?' said Mr. Hyams, still visibly disquieted.

'I'm sure I didn't notice,' Miriam replied petulantly. 'I think you must have forgot the sugar, mother, or else the tea is viler than usual. Why don't you let Jane cut the bread-and-butter instead of lazing in the kitchen?'

'Jane has been washing all day in the scullery,' said Mrs. Hyams apologetically.

'H'm!' snapped Miriam, her pretty face looking peevish and careworn. 'Jane ought to have to manage sixty-three girls, whose ignorant parents let them run wild at home and haven't the least idea of discipline. As for this chit of a Sugarman, don't you know that Jews always engage every fellow and girl that look at each other across the street, and make fun of them

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and discuss their united prospects before they are even introduced to each other ?'

She finished her tea, changed her dress, and went off to the theatre with a girl-friend. The really harassing nature of her work called for some such recreation. Daniel came in a little after she had gone out, and ate his supper, which was his dinner saved for him and warmed up in the oven.

Mendel sat studying from an unwieldy folio, which he held on his lap by the fireside, and bent over. When Daniel had done supper and was standing yawning and stretching himself, Mendel said suddenly, as if trying to bluff him :

'Why don't you ask your father to wish you *Mazzoltov ?*'

'*Mazzoltov ?* What for ?' asked Daniel, puzzled.

'On your engagement.'

'My engagement !' repeated Daniel, his heart thumping against his ribs.

'Yes ; to Bessie Sugarman.'

Mendel's eye, fixed scrutinizingly on his boy's face, saw it pass from white to red and from red to white. Daniel caught hold of the mantel as if to steady himself.

'But it is a lie !' he cried hotly. 'Who told you that ?'

'No one ; a man hinted as much.'

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'But I haven't even been in her company.'

'Yes; at the Purim ball.'

Daniel bit his lip.

'Damned gossips!' he cried. 'I'll never speak to the girl again.'

There was a tense silence for a few seconds, then old Hyams said:

'Why not? You love her.'

Daniel stared at him, his heart palpitating painfully; the blood in his ears throbbed mad, sweet music.

'You love her,' Mendel repeated quietly. 'Why do you not ask her to marry you? Do you fear she would refuse?'

Daniel burst into half-hysterical laughter. Then, seeing his father's half-reproachful, half-puzzled look, he said shamefacedly:

'Forgive me, father; I really couldn't help it. The idea of your talking about love! The oddity of it came over me all of a heap.'

'Why should I not talk about love?'

'Don't be so comically serious, father,' said Daniel, smiling afresh. 'What's come over you? What have you to do with love? One would think you were a romantic young fool on the stage. It's all nonsense about love. I don't love anybody, least of all Bessie Sugarman, so don't you go worrying your old head about *my* affairs. You get back to that musty book of

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yours there—I wonder if you've suddenly come across anything about love in that—and don't forget to use the reading glasses, and not your ordinary spectacles, else it'll be a sheer waste of money. By the way, mother, remember to go to the Eye Hospital, on Saturday, to be tested. I feel sure it's time you had a pair of specs, too.'

'Don't I look old enough already?' thought Mrs. Hyams. But she said, 'Very well, Daniel,' and began to clear away his supper.

'That's the best of being in the fancy,' said Daniel cheerfully. 'There's no end of articles you can get at trade prices.'

He sat for half an hour turning over the evening paper, then went to bed. Mr. and Mrs. Hyams's eyes sought each other involuntarily, but they said nothing. Mrs. Hyams fried a piece of *Worsht* for Miriam's supper and put it into the oven to keep hot; then she sat down opposite Mendel to stitch on a strip of fur, which had got unripped, on one of Miriam's jackets. The fire burnt briskly, little flames leapt up with a crackling sound, the clock ticked quietly.

Beenah threaded her needle at the first attempt.

'I can still see without spectacles,' she thought bitterly, but she said nothing.

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Mendel looked up furtively at her several times from his book. The meagreness of her parchment flesh, the thickening mesh of wrinkles, the snow-white hair, struck him with almost novel force. But he said nothing. Beenah patiently drew her needle through and through the fur, ever and anon glancing at Mendel's worn, spectacled face—the eyes deep in the sockets, the forehead that was bent over the folio furrowed painfully beneath the black *Koppel*, the complexion sickly. A lump seemed to be rising in her throat. She bent determinedly over her sewing, then suddenly looked up again. This time their eyes met. They did not droop them ; a strange subtle flash seemed to pass from soul to soul. They gazed at each other, trembling on the brink of tears.

'Beenah.'

The voice was thick with suppressed sobs.

'Yes, Mendel.'

'Thou hast heard?'

'Yes, Mendel.'

'He says he loves her not.'

'So he says.'

'It is lies, Beenah.'

'But wherefore should he lie?'

'Thou askest with thy mouth, not thy heart. Thou knowest that he wishes us not to think that he remains single for our sake. All his

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money goes to keep up this house we live in. It is the Law of Moses. Sawest thou not his face when I spake of Sugarman's daughter?'

Beenah rocked herself to and fro, crying:

'My poor Daniel! My poor lamb! Wait a little. I shall die soon. The All-High is merciful. Wait a little.'

Mendel caught Miriam's jacket, which was slipping to the floor, and laid it aside.

'It helps not to cry,' he said gently, longing to cry with her. 'This cannot be. He must marry the maiden whom his heart desires. Is it not enough that he feels we have crippled his life for the sake of our Sabbath? He never speaks of it, but it smoulders in his veins.'

'Wait a little!' moaned Beenah, still rocking to and fro.

'Nay, calm thyself.' He rose, and passed his horny hand tenderly over her white hair. 'We must not wait. Consider how long Daniel has waited.'

'Yes, my poor lamb, my poor lamb!' sobbed the old woman.

'If Daniel marries,' said the old man, striving to speak firmly, 'we have not a penny to live upon. Our Miriam requires all her salary. Already she gives us more than she can spare. She is a lady, in a great position. She must

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dress finely. Who knows, too, but that we are in the way of a gentleman marrying her? We are not fit to mix with high people. But, above all, Daniel must marry, and I must earn your and my living as I did when the children were young.'

'But what wilt thou do?' said Beenah, ceasing to cry, and looking up with affrighted face. 'Thou canst not go glaziering. Think of Miriam. What canst thou do, what canst thou do? Thou knowest no trade!'

'No, I know no trade,' he said bitterly. 'At home, as thou art aware, I was a stonemason; but here I could get no work without breaking the Sabbath, and my hand has forgotten its cunning. Perhaps I shall get my hand back.'

He took hers in the meantime. It was limp and chill, though so near the fire.

'Have courage,' he said. 'There is naught I can do here that will not shame Miriam. We cannot even go into an almshouse without shedding her blood; but the Holy One—blessed be He!—is good. I will go away.'

'Go away!' Beenah's clammy hand tightened her clasp of his. 'Thou wilt travel with ware in the country?'

'No. If it stands written that I must break with my children, let the gap be too wide for

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repining. Miriam will like it better. I will go to America.'

'To America!' Beenah's heart beat wildly. 'And leave me?'

A strange sense of desolation swept over her.

'Yes—for a little, anyhow. Thou must not face the first hardships. I shall find something to do. Perhaps in America there are more Jewish stone-masons to get work from. God will not desert us. There I can sell ware in the streets—do as I will. At the worst, I can always fall back upon glaziering. Have faith, my dove.'

The novel word of affection thrilled Beenah through and through.

'I shall send thee a little money; then, as soon as I can see my way clear, I shall send for thee, and thou shalt come out to me, and we will live happily together, and our children shall live happily here.'

But Beenah burst into fresh tears.

'Woe! woe!' she sobbed. 'How wilt thou, an old man, face the sea and strange faces all alone? See how sorely thou art racked with rheumatism. How canst thou go glaziering? Thou liest often groaning all the night. How shalt thou carry the heavy crate on thy shoulders?'

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'God will give me strength to do what is right.'

The tears were plain enough in his voice now, and would not be denied. His words forced themselves out in a husky wheeze.

Beenah threw her arms round his neck.

'No, no!' she cried hysterically. 'Thou shalt not go! Thou shalt not leave me!'

'I must go,' his parched lips articulated.

He could not see that the snow of her hair had drifted into her eyes, and was scarce whiter than her cheeks. His spectacles were a blur of mist.

'No, no,' she moaned incoherently. 'I shall die soon. God is merciful. Wait a little, wait a little! He will kill us both soon. My poor lamb! My poor Daniel! Thou shalt not leave me.'

The old man unlaced her arms from his neck.

'I must. I have heard God's word in the silence.'

'Then I will go with thee. Wherever thou goest I will go.'

'No, no; thou shalt not face the first hardships. I will front them alone. I am strong—I am a man.'

'And thou hast the heart to leave me?'

She looked piteously into his face, but hers was still hidden from him in the mist. But

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through the darkness the flash passed again. His hand groped for her waist; he drew her again towards him, and put the arms he had unlaced round his neck and stooped his wet cheek to hers. The past was a void; the forty years of joint housekeeping, since the morning each had seen a strange face on the pillow, faded to a point. For fifteen years they had been drifting towards each other — drifting nearer, nearer in dual loneliness; driven together by common suffering and growing alienation from the children they had begotten in common; drifting nearer, nearer, in silence, almost in unconsciousness. And now they had met. The supreme moment of their lives had come. The silence of forty years was broken. His withered lips sought hers, and love flooded their souls at last.

When the first delicious instants were over, Mendel drew a chair to the table and wrote a letter in Hebrew script and posted it, and Beenah picked up Miriam's jacket. The crackling flames had subsided to a steady glow, the clock ticked on quietly as before; but something new and sweet and sacred had come into her life, and Beenah no longer wished to die.

When Miriam came home she brought a little blast of cold air into the room. Beenah

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rose and shut the door, and put out Miriam's supper; she did not drag her feet now.

'Was it a nice play, Miriam?' said Beenah softly.

'The usual stuff and nonsense!' said Miriam peevishly. 'Love and all that sort of thing, as if the world never got any older.'

At breakfast next morning old Hyams received a letter by the first post. He carefully took his spectacles off and donned his reading-glasses to read it, throwing the envelope carelessly into the fire. When he had scanned a few lines, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and dropped the letter.

'What's the matter, father?' asked Daniel, while Miriam tilted her snub-nose curiously.

'Praised be God!' was all the old man could say.

'Well, what is it? Speak!' said Beenah, with unusual animation, while a flush of excitement lit up Miriam's face and made it beautiful.

'My brother in America has won a thousand pounds on the lotteree, and he invites me and Beenah to come and live with him.'

'Your brother in America!' repeated his children, staring.

'Why, I didn't know you had a brother in America!' added Miriam.

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'No; while he was poor I didn't mention him,' replied Mendel, with unintentional sarcasm. 'But I've heard from him several times. We both came over from Poland together, but the Board of Guardians sent him and a lot of others on to New York.'

'But you won't go, father!' said Daniel.

'Why not? I should like to see my brother before I die. We were very thick as boys.'

'But a thousand pounds isn't so very much,' Miriam could not refrain from saying.

Old Hyams had thought it boundless opulence, and was now sorry he had not done his brother a better turn.

'It will be enough for us all to live upon—he and Beenah and me. You see, his wife died, and he has no children.'

'You don't really mean to go?' gasped Daniel, unable to grasp the situation suddenly sprung upon him. 'How will you get the money to travel with?'

'Read here,' said Mendel quietly, passing him the letter. 'He offers to send it.'

'But it's written in Hebrew!' cried Daniel, turning it upside down hopelessly.

'You can read Hebrew writing, surely?' said his father.

'I could, years and years ago. I remember

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you taught me the letters. But my Hebrew correspondence has been so scanty——'

He broke off with a laugh, and handed the letter to Miriam, who surveyed it with mock comprehension. There was a look of relief in her eyes as she returned it to her father.

'He might have sent something to his nephew and his niece,' she said half seriously.

'Perhaps he will when I get to America and tell him how pretty you are,' said Mendel oracularly.

He looked quite joyous, and even ventured to pinch Miriam's flushed cheek roguishly, and she submitted to the indignity without a murmur.

'Why, *you're* looking as pleased as Punch too, mother!' said Daniel, in half-rueful amazement. 'You seem delighted at the idea of leaving us.'

'I always wanted to see America,' the old woman admitted, with a smile. 'I also shall renew an old friendship in New York.'

She looked meaningly at her husband, and in his eye was an answering love-light.

'Well, that's cool!' Daniel burst forth. 'But she doesn't mean it, does she, father?'

'I mean it,' Hyams answered.

'But it can't be true,' persisted Daniel, in

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ever-growing bewilderment. 'I believe it's all a hoax.'

Mendel hastily drained his coffee-cup.

'A hoax!' he murmured from behind the cup.

'Yes; I believe someone is having a lark with you.'

'Nonsense!' cried Mendel vehemently, as he put down his coffee-cup and picked up the letter from the table. 'Don't I know my own brother Yankov's writing? Besides, who else would know all the little things he writes about?'

Daniel was silenced, but lingered on after Miriam had departed to her wearisome duties.

'I shall write at once, accepting Yankov's offer,' said his father. 'Fortunately, we took the house by the week, so you can always move out if it is too large for you and Miriam. I can trust you to look after Miriam, I know, Daniel.'

Daniel expostulated yet further, but Mendel answered:

'He is so lonely. He cannot well come over here by himself, because he is half paralyzed. After all, what have I to do in England? And the mother naturally does not care to leave me. Perhaps I shall get my brother to travel with me to the land of Israel, and then we shall all

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end our days in Jerusalem, which you know has always been my heart's desire.'

Neither mentioned Bessie Sugarman.

'Why do you make so much bother?' Miriam said to Daniel in the evening. 'It's the best thing that could have happened. Who'd have dreamt at this hour of the day of coming into possession of a relative who might actually have something to leave us? It'll be a good story to tell, too.'

After *Shool* next morning Mendel spoke to the President.

'Can you lend me six pounds?' he asked.

Belcovitch staggered.

'Six pounds!' he repeated, dazed.

'Yes. I wish to go to America with my wife. And I want you, moreover, to give your hand, as a countryman, that you will not breathe a word of this, whatever you hear. Beenah and I have sold a few little trinkets which our children gave us, and we have reckoned that with six pounds more we shall be able to take steerage passages and just exist till I get work.'

'But six pounds is a very great sum, without sureties,' said Belcovitch, rubbing his time-worn workaday high hat in his agitation.

'I know it is!' answered Mendel; 'but God

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is my witness that I mean to pay you. And if I die before I can do so, I vow to send word to my son, Daniel, who will pay you the balance. You know my son Daniel. His word is an oath.'

'But where shall I get six pounds from?' said Bear helplessly. 'I am only a poor tailor. And my daughter gets married soon. It is a great sum—by my honourable word it is. I have never lent so much in my life, nor even been security for such an amount.'

Mendel dropped his head. There was a moment of anxious silence. Bear thought deeply.

'I tell you what I'll do,' said Bear at last. 'I'll lend you five, if you can manage to come out with that.'

Mendel gave a great sigh of relief.

'God shall bless you!' he said. He wrung the sweater's hand passionately. 'I dare say we shall find another sovereign's-worth to sell.' Mendel clinched the borrowing by standing the lender a glass of rum, and Bear felt secure against the graver shocks of doom. If the worst came to the worst now, he had still had something for his money.

And so Mendel and Beenah sailed away over the Atlantic. Daniel accompanied them to Liverpool, but Miriam said she could not get a

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day's holiday; perhaps she remembered the rebuke Esther Ansell had drawn down on herself, and was chary of asking.

At the dock in the chill dawn, Mendel Hyams kissed his son Daniel on the forehead, and said in a broken voice:

'Good-bye; God bless you!' He dared not add, 'and God bless your Bessie, my daughter-in-law to be;' but the benediction was in his heart. Daniel turned away heavy-hearted, but the old man touched him on the shoulder, and said in a low, tremulous voice:

'Won't you forgive me for putting you into the fancy goods?'

'Father! What do you mean?' said Daniel, choking. 'Surely you are not thinking of the wild words I spoke years and years ago. I have long forgotten them.'

'Then you will remain a good Jew,' said Mendel, trembling all over, 'even when we are far away?'

'With God's help,' said Daniel.

And then Mendel turned to Beenah and kissed her, weeping, and the faces of the old couple were radiant behind their tears.

Daniel stood on the clamorous, hustling wharf watching the ship move slowly from her moorings towards the open river. And neither he nor anyone in the world but the happy pair

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knew that Mendel and Beenah were on their honeymoon.

* * * * *

Mrs. Hyams died two years after her honeymoon, and old Hyams laid a lover's kiss upon her sealed eyelids. Then, being absolutely alone in the world, he sold off his scanty furniture, sent the balance of the debt with a sovereign of undemanded interest to Bear Belcovitch, and girded up his loins for the journey to Jerusalem, which had been the dream of his life.

But the dream of his life had better have remained a dream. Mendel saw the hills of Palestine, and the holy Jordan, and Mount Moriah, the site of the Temple, and the tombs of Absalom and Melchitzedek, and the gate of Zion, and the aqueduct built by Solomon, and all that he had longed to see from boyhood. But somehow it was not *his* Jerusalem, scarce more than his London Ghetto transplanted, only grown filthier, and narrower, and more ragged, with cripples for beggars and lepers in lieu of hawkers. The magic of his dream-city was not here. This was something prosaic, almost sordid; it made his heart sink as he thought of the sacred splendours of the Zion he had imaged in his suffering soul. The rainbows builded of his bitter tears did

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not span the firmament of this dingy Eastern city, set amid sterile hills. Where were the roses and lilies, the cedars and the fountains? Mount Moriah was here indeed, but it bore the Mosque of Omar, and the Temple of Jehovah was but one ruined wall. The Shechinah, the Divine glory, had faded into cold sunshine. 'Who shall go up into the mount of Jehovah?' Lo, the Moslem worshipper and the Christian tourist. Barracks and convents stood on Zion's hill. His brethren, rulers by Divine right of the soil they trod, were lost in the chaos of populations—Syrians, Armenians, Turks, Copts, Abyssinians, Europeans—as their synagogues were lost amid the domes and minarets of the Gentiles. The city was full of venerated relics of the Christ his people had lived—and died—to deny, and over all flew the crescent flag of the Mussulman.

And so every Friday, heedless of scoffing onlookers, Mendel Hyams kissed the stones of the Wailing-Place, bedewing their barrenness with tears, and every year at Passover, until he was gathered to his fathers, he continued to pray, 'Next year—in Jerusalem.'

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HEBREW'S FRIDAY NIGHT.

'Ah, the Men-of-the-Earth!' said Pinchas to Reb Shemuel. 'Ignorant fanatics! how shall a movement prosper in their hands? They have not the poetic vision; their ideas are as the mole's; they wish to make Messiahs out of halfpence. What inspiration for the soul is there in the sight of snuffy collectors that have the air of *Schnorrers*—with Karlkammer's red hair for a flag, and the sound of Gradkoski's nose-blowing for a trumpet-peal? But I have written an acrostic against Guedalyah the Greengrocer, virulent as serpents' gall. He the Redeemer, indeed, with his diseased potatoes and his flat gingerbeer! Not thus did the great prophets and teachers in Israel figure the Return. Let a great signal-fire be lit in Israel, and, lo! the beacons will leap up on every mountain, and tongue of flame shall call to tongue. Yea, I, even I,

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Melchitzedek Pinchas, will light the fire forthwith.'

'Nay, not to-day,' said Reb Shemuel, with his humorous twinkle. 'It is the Sabbath.'

The Rabbi was returning from synagogue, and Pinchas was giving him his company on the short homeward journey. At their heels trudged Levi, and on the other side of Reb Shemuel walked Eliphaz Chowchoski, a miserable-looking Pole, whom Reb Shemuel was taking home to supper. In those days Reb Shemuel was not alone in taking to his hearth 'the Sabbath guest'—some forlorn starveling or other—to sit at the table in like honour with the master. It was an object-lesson in Equality and Fraternity for the children of many a well-to-do household, nor did it fail altogether in the homes of the poor. 'All Israel are brothers,' and how better honour the Sabbath than by making the lip-babble a reality?

'You will speak to your daughter?' said Pinchas, changing the subject abruptly. 'You will tell her that what I wrote to her is not a millionth part of what I feel; that she is my sun by day, and my moon and stars by night; that I must marry her at once or die; that I think of nothing in the world but her; that I can do, write, plan, nothing without

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her; that once she smiles on me I will write her great love-poems, greater than Byron's, greater than Heine's—the real song of songs, which is Pinchas's; that I will make her immortal as Dante made Beatrice, as Petrarch made Laura; that I walk about wretched, bedewing the pavements with my tears; that I sleep not by night nor eat by day. You will tell her this?'

He laid his finger pleadingly on his nose.

'I will tell her,' said Reb Shemuel. 'You are a son-in-law to gladden the heart of any man. But I fear the maiden looks but coldly on wooers. Besides, you are fourteen years older than she.'

'Then I love her twice as much as Jacob loved Rachel, for it is written: "Seven years were but as a day in his love for her." To me fourteen years are but as a day in my love for Hannah.'

The Rabbi laughed at the quibble, and said:

'You are like the man who, when he was accused of being twenty years older than the maiden he desired, replied: "But when I look at her I shall become ten years younger, and when she looks at me she will become ten years older, and thus we shall be even."'

Pinchas laughed enthusiastically in his turn, but replied:

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'Surely you will plead my cause—you, whose motto is the Hebrew saying, "The husband help the housewife, God help the bachelor."'

'But have you the wherewithal to support her?'

'Shall my writings not suffice? If there are none to protect literature in England, we will go abroad — to your birthplace, Reb Shemuel, the cradle of great scholars.'

The poet spoke yet more, but in the end his excited, stridulous accents fell on Reb Shemuel's ears as a storm without on the ears of the slippered reader by the fireside. He had dropped into a delicious reverie, tasting in advance the Sabbath peace. The work of the week was over. The faithful Jew could enter on his rest—the narrow, miry streets faded before the brighter image of his brain. 'Come, my beloved, to meet the Bride; the face of the Sabbath let us welcome.'

To-night his sweetheart would wear her Sabbath face, putting off the mask of the shrew, which hid, not from him, the angel countenance. To-night he could in very truth call his wife (as the Rabbi in the Talmud did), 'not wife, but home.' To-night she would be in very truth *Simcha*—'rejoicing.' A cheerful warmth glowed at his heart; love for all the wonderful creation dissolved him in tenderness.

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As he approached the door, cheerful lights gleamed on him like a heavenly smile. He invited Pinchas to enter, but the poet, in view of his passion, thought it prudent to let others plead for him, and went off with his finger to his nose in final reminder. The Reb kissed the *Mezuzah* on the outside of the door, and his daughter, who met him, on the inside. Everything was as he had pictured it: the two tall wax candles in quaint, heavy silver candlesticks, the spotless table-cloth, the dish of fried fish made picturesque with sprigs of parsley, the Sabbath loaves shaped like boys' tip-cats—with a curious plait of crust from point to point, and thickly sprinkled with a drift of poppy-seed, and covered with a velvet cloth embroidered with Hebrew words—the flask of wine and the silver goblet. The sight was familiar, yet it always struck the simple old Reb anew, with a sense of special blessing.

'Good-Shabbos, Simcha,' said Reb Shemuel.

'Good-Shabbos, Shemuel,' said Simcha.

The light of love was in her eyes, and in her hair her newest comb. Her sharp features shone with peace and goodwill and the consciousness of having duly lit the Sabbath candles and thrown the morsel of dough into the fire. Shemuel kissed her; then he laid his hands upon Hannah's head, and murmured:

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'May God make thee as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah!' and upon Levi's, murmuring: 'May God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh!'

Even the callous Levi felt the breath of sanctity in the air, and had a vague, restful sense of his Sabbath angel hovering about and causing him to cast two shadows on the wall, while his evil angel shivered impotent on the doorstep.

Then Reb Shemuel repeated three times a series of sentences commencing: 'Peace be unto you, ye ministering angels,' and thereupon the wonderful picture of an ideal woman from Proverbs, looking affectionately at Simcha the while: 'A woman of worth, whoso findeth her, her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband trusteth in her. . . . Good and not evil will she do him all the days of her life. . . . She riseth while it is yet night, giveth food to her household and a task to her maidens. . . . She putteth her own hands to the spindle. . . . She stretcheth out her hand to the poor. . . . Strength and honour are her clothing, and she looketh forth smilingly to the morrow. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness is on her tongue. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. . . . Deceitful is favour, and vain is beauty;

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but the woman that feareth the Lord, *she* shall be praised.'

Then, washing his hands with the due benediction, he filled the goblet with wine, and while everyone reverently stood he 'made Kiddush,' in a traditional joyous recitative:

'"... Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God! King of the universe! Creator of the fruit of the vine! who doth sanctify us with His commandments and hath delight in us. Thou hast chosen and sanctified us above all peoples, and with love and favour hast made us to inherit Thy holy Sabbath. ..."'

And all the household, and the hungry Pole, answered 'Amen,' each sipping of the cup in due gradation, then eating a special morsel of bread cut by the father and dipped in salt; after which the good wife served the fish, and cups and saucers clattered and knives and forks rattled. And after a few mouthfuls the Pole knew himself a prince in Israel, and felt he must forthwith make choice of a maiden to grace his royal Sabbath board. Soup followed the fish; it was not served direct from the saucepan, but transferred by way of a large tureen, since any creeping thing that might have got into the soup would have rendered the plateful in which it appeared not legally potable, whereas if it were detected in the large

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tureen its polluting powers would be dissipated by being diffused over such a large mass of fluid. For like religious reasons, another feature of the etiquette of the modern fashionable table had been anticipated by many centuries—the eaters washed their hands in a little bowl of water after the meal. The Pullack was thus kept, by main religious force, in touch with a liquid with which he had no external sympathy.

When supper was over grace was chanted, and then the *Zemiroth* were sung—songs summing up, in light and jingling metre, the very essence of holy joyousness—neither riotous nor ascetic: the note of spiritualized common-sense which has been the key-note of historical Judaism. For to feel 'the delight of Sabbath' is a duty, and to take three meals thereon a religious obligation—the sanctification of the sensuous by a creed to which everything is holy. The Sabbath is the hub of the Jew's universe; to protract it is a virtue, to love it a liberal education. It cancels all mourning—even for Jerusalem; the candles may gutter out at their own greasy will, unsnuffed, untended—is not Sabbath its own self-sufficient light?

'This is the sanctified rest-day;
Happy the man who observes it,
Thinks of it over the wine-cup,
Feeling no pang at his heart-strings

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For that his purse-strings are empty;
Joyous, and if he must borrow,
God will repay the good lender.
Meat, wine and fish in profusion—
See no delight is deficient.
Let but the table be spread well,
Angels of God answer "Amen"!
So when a soul is in dolour,
Cometh the sweet restful Sabbath,
Singing and joy in its footsteps;
Rapidly floweth Sambatyon,
Till that, of God's love the symbol,
Sabbath, the holy, the peaceful,
Husheth its turbulent waters.

Bless Him, O constant companions,
Rock from whose stores we have eaten,
Eaten have we and have left, too,
Just as the Lord hath commanded,
Father and Shepherd and Feeder.
His is the bread we have eaten,
His is the wine we have drunken,
Wherefore with lips let us praise Him,
Lord of the land of our fathers,
Gratefully, ceaselessly chaunting,
"None like Jehovah is holy."

Light and rejoicing to Israel,
Sabbath, the soother of sorrows,
Comfort of down-trodden Israel,
Healing the hearts that were broken!
Banish despair! Here is Hope come!
What! A soul crushed? Lo, a stronger
Bringeth the balsamous Sabbath.
Build, oh, rebuild Thou, Thy Temple;
Fill again Zion, Thy city.
Clad with delight will we go there,
Other and new songs to sing there,
Merciful One and All-Holy,
Praisèd for ever and ever.'

The Pullack began to speak with his host about the persecution in the land whence he

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had come—the bright spot in his picture being the fidelity of his brethren under trial, only a minority deserting, and those already tainted with Epicureanism—students wishful of University distinction and such-like. Orthodox Jews are rather surprised when men of (secular) education remain in the fold.

Hannah took advantage of a pause in their conversation to say in German :

'I am so glad, father, thou didst not bring that man home.'

'What man ?' said Reb Shemuel.

'The dirty monkey-faced little man who talks so much.'

The Reb considered.

'I know none such.'

'Pinchas she means,' said her mother—'the poet !'

Reb Shemuel looked at her gravely. This did not sound promising.

'Why dost thou speak so harshly of thy fellow-creatures ?' he said. 'The man is a scholar and a poet, such as we have too few in Israel.'

'We have too many *Schnorrers* in Israel already,' retorted Hannah.

'Sh !' whispered Reb Shemuel, reddening, and indicating his guest with a slight movement of the eye.

Hannah bit her lip in self-humiliation, and

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hastened to load the lucky Pole's plate with an extra piece of fish.

'He has written me a letter,' she went on.

'He has told me so,' he answered. 'He loves thee with a great love.'

'What nonsense, Shemuel!' broke in Simcha, setting down her coffee-cup with work-a-day violence. 'The idea of a man who has not a penny to bless himself with marrying our Hannah! They would be on the Board of Guardians in a month.'

'Money is not everything. Wisdom and learning outweigh much. And, as the Midrash says: "As a scarlet ribbon becometh a black horse, so poverty becometh the daughter of Jacob." The world stands on the Torah, not on gold: as it is written: "Better is the Law of Thy mouth to me than thousands of gold or silver." He is greater than I, for he studies the law for nothing, like the fathers of the Mishna, while I am paid a salary.'

'Methinks thou art little inferior,' said Simcha, 'for thou retainest little enough thereof. Let Pinchas get nothing for himself, 'tis his affair; but if he wants my Hannah he must get something for her. Were the fathers of the Mishna also fathers of families?'

'Certainly, is it not a command? "Be fruitful and multiply."'

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'And how did their families live?'

'Many of our sages were artisans.'

'Aha!' snorted Simcha triumphantly.

'And says not the Talmud,' put in the Pole, as if he were on the family council, '"Flay a carcass in the streets rather than be under an obligation"?' This with supreme unconsciousness of any personal application. 'Yea, and said not Rabban Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Judah, the prince, "It is commendable to join the study of the law with worldly employment"? Did not Moses our teacher keep sheep?'

'Truth,' replied the host. 'I agree with Maimonides that man should first secure a living, then prepare a residence, and after that seek a wife, and that they are fools who invert the order. But Pinchas works also with his pen. He writes articles in the papers. But the great thing, Hannah, is that he loves the Law.'

'H'm,' said Hannah. 'Let him marry the Law, then.'

'He is in a hurry,' said Reb Shemuel, with a flash of irreverent facetiousness. 'And he cannot become the Bridegroom of the Law till *Simchath Torah*.'

All laughed. The Bridegroom of the Law is the temporary title of the Jew who enjoys

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the distinction of being 'called up' to the public reading of the last fragment of the Pentateuch, which is got through once a year.

Under the encouragement of the laughter, the Rabbi added:

'But he will know much more of his bride than the majority of the Law's bridegrooms.'

Hannah took advantage of her father's pleasure in the effect of his jokes to show him Pinchas's epistle, which he deciphered laboriously. It commenced:

H ebrew Hebe,
A ll-fair Maid,
N ext to Heaven
N ightly laid,
A h, I love you,
H alf afraid.

The Pole, looking a different being from the wretch who had come empty, departed invoking peace on the household; Simcha went into the kitchen to superintend the removal of the crockery thither, Levi slipped out to pay his respects to Esther Ansell, for the evening was yet young, and father and daughter were left alone.

Reb Shemuel was already poring over a Pentateuch in his Friday night duty of reading the portion twice in Hebrew and once in Chaldaic.

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Hannah sat opposite him, studying the kindly furrowed face, the massive head set on rounded shoulders, the shaggy eyebrows, the long, whitening beard moving with the mumble of the pious lips, the brown peering eyes held close to the sacred tome, the high forehead crowned with the black skull-cap.

She felt a moisture gathering under her eyelids as she looked at him.

'Father,' she said at last, in a gentle voice.

'Did you call me, Hannah?' he asked, looking up.

'Yes, dear. About this man, Pinchas.'

'Yes, Hannah.'

'I am sorry I spoke harshly of him.'

'Ah, that is right, my daughter. If he is poor and ill-clad we must only honour him the more. Wisdom and learning must be respected even if they appear in rags. Abraham entertained God's messengers though they came as weary travellers.'

'I know, father. It is not because of his appearance that I do not like him. If he is really a scholar and a poet, I will try to admire him as you do.'

'Now you speak like a true daughter of Israel.'

'But about my marrying him—you are not really in earnest?'

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'*He* is,' said Reb Shemuel evasively.

'Ah, I knew you were not,' she said, catching the lurking twinkle in his eye. 'You know I could never marry a man like that.'

'Your mother could,' said the Reb.

'Dear old goose!' she said, leaning across to pull his beard. 'You are not a bit like that; you know a thousand times more, you know you do.'

The old Rabbi held up his hands in comic deprecation.

'Yes, you do,' she persisted. 'Only you let him talk so much, you let everybody talk and bamboozle you.'

Reb Shemuel drew the hand that fondled his beard in his own, feeling the fresh warm skin with a puzzled look.

'The hands are the hands of Hannah,' he said; 'but the voice is the voice of Simcha.'

Hannah laughed merrily.

'All right, dear; I won't scold you any more. I'm so glad it didn't really enter your great, stupid, clever old head that I was likely to care for Pinchas.'

'My dear daughter, Pinchas wished to take you to wife, and I felt pleased. It is a union with a son of the Torah, who has also the pen of a ready writer. He asked me to tell you, and I did.'

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'But you would not like me to marry anyone I did not like?'

'God forbid! My little Hannah shall marry whomever she pleases.'

A wave of emotion passed over the girl's face.

'You don't mean that, father,' she said, shaking her head.

'True as the Torah. Why should I not?'

'Suppose,' she said slowly, 'I wanted to marry a Christian?'

Her heart beat painfully as she put the question.

Reb Shemuel laughed heartily.

'My Hannah would have made a good Talmudist. Of course I don't mean it in that sense.'

'Yes; but if I was to marry a very *link* Jew, you'd think it almost as bad.'

'No, no!' said the Reb, shaking his head. 'That's a different thing altogether. A Jew is a Jew, and a Christian a Christian.'

'But you can't always distinguish between them,' argued Hannah. 'There are Jews who behave as if they were Christians, except, of course, they don't believe in the Crucified One.'

Still the old Reb shook his head.

'The worst of Jews cannot put off his Judaism. His unborn soul undertook the Yoke of the Torah at Sinai.'

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'Then you really wouldn't mind if I married a *link* Jew?'

He looked at her startled, a suspicion dawning in his eyes.

'I should mind,' he said slowly. 'But if you loved him he would become a good Jew.'

The simple conviction of his words moved her to tears, but she kept them back.

'But if he wouldn't?'

'I should pray. While there is life there is hope for the sinner in Israel.'

She fell back on her old question.

'And you would really not mind whom I married?'

'Follow your heart, my little one,' said Reb Shemuel. 'It is a good heart, and it will not lead you wrong.'

Hannah turned away to hide the tears that could no longer be stayed. Her father resumed his reading of the Law.

But he had got through very few verses ere he felt a soft warm arm round his neck, and a wet cheek laid close to his.

'Father, forgive me!' whispered the lips. 'I am so sorry. I thought that—that I—that you—— Oh, father, father! I feel as if I had never known you before to-night!'

'What is it, my daughter?' said Reb Shemuel,

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stumbling into Yiddish in his anxiety. 'What hast thou done?'

'I have betrothed myself,' she answered, unwittingly adopting his dialect. 'I have betrothed myself without telling thee or mother.'

'To whom?' he asked anxiously.

'To a Jew,' she hastened to assure him. 'But he is neither a Talmud-sage nor pious. He is newly returned from the Cape.'

'Ah, they are a *link* lot!' muttered the Reb anxiously. 'Where didst thou first meet him?'

'At the Club,' she answered. 'At the Purim ball—the night before Sam Levine came round here to be divorced from me.'

He wrinkled his great brow.

'Thy mother would have thee go,' he said. 'Thou didst not deserve I should divorce thee. What is his name?'

'David Brandon. He is not like other Jewish young men. I thought he was and did him wrong, and mocked at him when first he spoke to me, so that afterwards I felt tender towards him. His conversation is agreeable, for he thinks for himself; and deeming thou wouldst not hear of such a match, and that there was no danger, I met him at the Club several times in the evening, and—and—thou knowest the rest.'

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She turned away her face, blushing, contrite, happy, anxious.

Her love-story was as simple as her telling of it. David Brandon was not the shadowy prince of her maiden dreams, nor was the passion exactly as she had imagined it; it was both stronger and stranger, and the sense of secrecy and impending opposition instilled into her love a poignant sweetness.

The Reb stroked her hair silently.

'I would not have said "Yea" so quick, father,' she went on, 'but David had to go to Germany to take a message to the aged parents of his Cape chum, who died in the gold-fields. David had promised the dying man to go personally as soon as he returned to England—I think it was a request for forgiveness and blessing—but after meeting me he delayed going, and when I learnt of it I reproached him, but he said he could not tear himself away, and he would not go till I had confessed I loved him. At last I said if he would go home the moment I said it, and not bother about getting me a ring or anything, but go off to Germany the first thing the next morning, I would admit I loved him a little bit. Thus did it occur. He went off last Wednesday. Oh, isn't it cruel to think, father, that he should be going with love and

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joy in his heart to the parents of his dead friend ?'

Her father's head was bent. She lifted it up by the chin and looked pleadingly into the big brown eyes.

'Thou art not angry with me, father ?'

'No, Hannah. But thou shouldst have told me from the first.'

'I always meant to, father. But I feared to grieve thee.'

'Wherefore ? The man is a Jew. And thou lovest him, dost thou not ?'

'As my life, father.'

He kissed her lips.

'It is enough, my Hannah. With thee to love him, he will become pious. When a man has a good Jewish wife like my beloved daughter, who will keep a good Jewish house, he cannot be long among the sinners. The light of a true Jewish home will lead his footsteps back to God.'

Hannah pressed her face to his in silence. She could not speak. She had not strength to undeceive him further, to tell him she had no care for trivial forms. Besides, in the flush of gratitude and surprise at her father's tolerance, she felt stirrings of responsive tolerance to his religion. It was not the moment to analyze her feelings or to enunciate her state of mind

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regarding religion. She simply let herself sink in the sweet sense of restored confidence and love, her head resting against his.

Presently Reb Shemuel put his hands on her head and murmured again :

'May God make thee as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah!' Then he added : 'Go now, my daughter, and make glad the heart of thy mother.'

Hannah suspected a shade of satire in the words, but was not sure.

* * * * *

The roaring Sambatyon of life was at rest in the Ghetto ; on thousands of squalid homes the light of Sinai shone. The Sabbath angels whispered words of hope and comfort to the footsore hawker and the aching machinist, and refreshed their parched souls with celestial anodyne and made them kings of the hour, with leisure to dream of the golden chairs that awaited them in Paradise.

The Ghetto welcomed the Sabbath Bride with proud song and humble feast, and sped her parting with optimistic symbolisms of fire and wine, of spice and light and shadow. All around, their neighbours sought distraction in the blazing public-houses, and their tipsy bellowings resounded through the streets and mingled with the Hebrew hymns. Here and there the

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voice of a beaten woman rose on the air. But no Son of the Covenant was among the revellers or the wife-beaters; the Jews remained a chosen race, a peculiar people, faulty enough, but redeemed at least from the grosser vices—a little human islet won from the waters of animalism by the genius of ancient engineers. For while the genius of the Greek or the Roman, the Egyptian or the Phœnician, survives but in word and stone, the Hebrew word alone was made flesh.

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CHAPTER XIX.

WITH THE STRIKERS.

'IGNORANT donkey-heads!' cried Pinchas next Friday morning. 'Him dey make a Rabbi, and give him the right of answering questions, and he know no more of Judaism'—the patriotic poet paused to take a bite out of his ham sandwich —'than a cow of Sunday. I lof his daughter, and I tell him so, and he tells me she lof another. But I haf held him up on de point of my pen to de contempt of posterity. I haf written an acrostic on him; it is terrible. Her vill I shoot.'

'Ah, they are a bad lot, these Rabbis!' said Simon Wolf, sipping his sherry.

The conversation took place in English, and the two men were seated in a small private room in a public-house, awaiting the advent of the strike committee.

'They are like de rest of the community; I

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vash my hands of dem,' said the poet, waving his cigar in a fiery crescent.

'I have long since washed my hands of them,' said Simon Wolf, though the fact was not obvious. 'We can trust neither our Rabbis nor our philanthropists. The Rabbis, engrossed in the hypocritical endeavour to galvanize the corpse of Judaism into a vitality that shall last at least their own lifetime, have neither time nor thought for the great labour question. Our philanthropists do but scratch the surface. They give the working man with their right hand what they have stolen from him with the left.'

Simon Wolf was the great Jewish labour-leader. Most of his cronies were rampant atheists, disgusted with the commercialism of the believers. They were clever young artisans from Russia and Poland with a smattering of education, a feverish receptiveness for all the iconoclastic ideas that were in the London air, a hatred of capitalism and strong social sympathies. They wrote vigorous Jargon for the *Friend of Labour*, and compassed the extreme proverbial limits of impiety by 'eating pork on the Day of Atonement.' This was done partly to vindicate their religious opinions, whose correctness was demonstrated by the non-appearance of thunderbolts, partly to show that

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nothing one way or the other was to be expected from Providence or its professors.

'The only way for our poor brethren to be saved from their slavery,' went on Simon Wolf, 'is for them to combine against the sweaters, and to let the West-End Jews go and hang themselves.'

'Ah, that is mine policee!' said Pinchas; 'that was mine policee ven I founded de Holy Land League. Help yourselves, and Pinchas vill help you. You muz combine, and den I vill be de Moses to lead you out of de land of bondage. *Nein*, I vill be more than Moses, for he had not de gift of eloquence.'

'And he was the meekest man that ever lived,' added Wolf.

'Yes, he was a fool-man,' said Pinchas imperturbably. 'I agree with Goethe—"*Nur lumpen sind bescheiden*": only clods are modaist. I am not modaist. Is de Almighty modaist? I know, I feel vat I am, vat I can do.'

'Look here, Pinchas, you're a very clever fellow, I know, and I'm very glad to have you with us; but, remember, I have organized this movement for years, planned it out as I sat toiling in Belcovitch's machine-room, written on it till I've got the cramp, spoken on it till I

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was hoarse, given evidence before innumerable commissions; it is I who have stirred up the East-End Jews and sent the echo of their cry into Parliament, and I will not be interfered with; do you hear?'

'Yes, I hear. Vy you not listen to me? You no understand vat I mean.'

'Oh, I understand you well enough. You want to oust me from my position.'

'Me? me?' repeated the poet in an injured and astonished tone; 'vy, midout you de movement would crumble like a mummy in the air; be not such a fool-man! To everybody I haf said: "Ah, dat Simon Wolf he is a great man, a vair great man; he is de only man among de English Jews who can save de East End; it is he that should be member for Vitechapel, not that fool-man, Gideon." Be not such a fool-man. Haf anoder glaz sherry and some more ham sandwiches.'

The poet had a simple, childlike delight in occasionally assuming the host.

'Very well, so long as I have your assurance,' said the mollified labour-leader, mumbling the conclusion of the sentence into his wineglass; 'but you know how it is. After I have worked the thing for years, I don't want to see a drone romp in and take the credit.'

'Yes, "*sic vos non vobis*," as the Talmud says.

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Do you know, I haf proved that Virgil stole all his ideas from the Talmud.'

'First there was Black, and then there was Cohen; now Gideon, M.P., sees he can get some advertisement out of it in the press, he wants to preside at the meetings. Members of Parliament are a bad lot.'

'Yes, but dey shall not take de credit from you. I vill write and expose dem; the world shall know vat humbugs dey are; how de whole wealthy West End stood idly by with her hands in de working men's pockets while you vere building up de great organization. You know all de Jargon-papers jump at vat I write; dey sign my name in vair large type—Melchitzedek Pinchas—under everyting, and I am so pleased with deir homage I do not ask for payment, for dey are vair poor. By dis time I am famous everyvere; my name has been in de evening papers, and ven I write about you to de *Times* you will become as famous as me. And den you vill write about me; ve vill put up for Vitechapel at the elections; ve vill both become membairs of Parliament, I and you—eh?'

'I'm afraid there's not much chance of that,' sighed Simon Wolf.

'Vy not? Dere are two seats. Vy should you not haf de oder?'

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'Ain't you forgetting about election expenses, Pinchas?'

'*Nein!*' repeated the poet emphatically. 'I forgets noding. Ve vill start a fund.'

'We can't start funds for ourselves.'

'Be not a fool-man! of course not; you for me, I for you.'

'You won't get much,' said Simon, laughing ruefully at the idea.'

'Tink not? P'raps not. But *you* vill for me. Ven I am in Parliament de load will be easier for us both. Besides, I vill go to de Continent soon to give avay de rest of de copies of my book. I expect to make tousands of pounds by it, for dey know how to honour scholars and poets abroad. Dere dey haf not stupid-head stockbrokers like Gideon, M.P., ministers like the Reverend Elkan Benjamin, who keep four mistresses, and Rabbis like Reb Shemuel, with long beards outside and emptiness within, who sell deir daughters.'

'I don't want to look so far ahead,' said Simon Wolf. 'At present, what we have to do is to carry this strike through. Once we get our demands from the masters, a powerful blow will have been struck for the emancipation of ten thousand working men. They will have more money and more leisure, a little less of hell and a little more of heaven. The coming Pass-

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over would, indeed, be an appropriate festival even for the most heterodox among them if we could strike off their chains in the interim. But it seems impossible to get unity among them; a large section appears to mistrust me, though I swear to you, Pinchas, I am actuated by nothing but an unselfish desire for their good. May this morsel of sandwich choke me if I have ever been swayed by anything but sympathy with their wrongs. And yet you saw that malicious pamphlet that was circulated against me in Yiddish—silly, illiterate scribble!'

'Oh no!' said Pinchas; 'it was vair beautiful—sharp as de sting of de hornet. But vat can you expect? Christ suffered; all great benefactors suffer. Am *I* happy? But it is only your own foolishness dat you must dank if dere is dissension in de camp. The *Gemorah* says ve muz be vize, *chocham*, ve muz haf tact. See vat you haf done! You haf frighten avay de ortodox fool-men. Dey are oppressed, dey sweat, but dey tink deir God make dem sweat. Vy you tell dem no? Vat mattairs? Free them from hunger and tirst first, den freedom from deir fool-superstitions vill come of itself. Jeshurun vax fat and kick. Hey? You go de wrong vay.'

'Do you mean I'm to pretend to be *froom?*' said Simon Wolf.

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'And ven? Vat mattairs? You are a fool-man. To get to de goal one muz go crooked vays. Ah, you haf no stadesmanship. You frighten dem. You lead processions vid bands and banners on Shabbos to de *Shools*. Many who vould be glad to be delivered by you, tremble for de heavenly lightning. Dey go not in de procession. Many go when deir head is on fire, afterwards dey take fright and beat deir breasts. Vat vill happen? De ortodox are de majority; in time dere vill come a leader who vill be or pretend to be ortodox as vell as Socialist. Den vat become of you? You are left vid von, two, tree ateists, not enough to make *Minyan*. No, ve muz be *chocham;* ve muz take de men as ve find dem. God has made two classes of men—vise-men and fool-men. Dere is one vise-man to a million fool-men, and he sits on deir head and dey support him. If dese fool-men vant to go to *Shool* and to fast on *Yom Kippur*, vat for you make a feast of pig and shock dem, so dey not believe in your Socialism? Ven you vant to eat pig, you do it here, like ve do now, in private. In public ve spit out ven ve see pig. Ah, you are a fool-man! I am a stadesman, a politician. I vill be de Machiavelli of de movement.'

'Ah, Pinchas, you are a devil of a chap,'

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said Wolf, laughing. 'And yet you say you are the poet of patriotism and Palestine!'

'Vy not? Vy should ve lif here in captivity? Vy ve shall not haf our own State and our own President, a man who combine deep politic vid knowledge of Hebrew literature and de pen of a poet? No, let us fight to get back our country; ve vill not hang our harps on de villows of Babylon and weep; ve vill take our swords vid Ezra and Judas Maccabæus and——'

'One thing at a time, Pinchas,' said Simon Wolf. 'At present we have to consider how to distribute these food-tickets. The committee-men are late; I wonder if there has been any fighting at the centres, where they have been addressing meetings.'

'Ah, dat is anoder point,' said Pinchas. 'Vy you no let me address meetings, not de little ones in de street, but de great ones in de hall of de club? Dere my vords vould rush like de moundain dorrents, sveeping avay de corruptions. But you let all dese fool-men talk. You know, Simon, I and you are de only two persons in de East End who speak Ainglish properly.'

'I know. But these speeches must be in Yiddish.'

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'*Gewiss.* But who speak her like me and you? You muz gif me a speech to-night.'

'I can't—really not,' said Simon. 'The programme's arranged. You know they're all jealous of me already. I dare not leave one out.'

'Ah, no! do not say dat!' said Pinchas, laying his finger pleadingly on the side of his nose.

'I must.'

'You tear my heart in two. I lof you like a broder, almost like a voman. Just von!' There was an appealing smile in his eye.

'I cannot. I shall have a hornets' nest about my ears.'

'Von leedle von, Simon Wolf?' Again his finger was on his nose.

'It is impossible.'

'You haf not considair how my Yiddish shall make kindle every heart, strike tears from every eye, as Moses did from de rock.'

'I have. I know. But what am I to do?'

'Jus dis leedle favour, and I vill be gradeful to you all mine life.'

'You know I would if I could.'

Pinchas's finger was laid more insistently on his nose.

'Just dis vonce. Grant me dis, and I vill nevair ask anyding of you in all my life.

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'No, no! Don't bother, Pinchas. Go away now,' said Wolf, getting annoyed. 'I have lots to do!'

'I vill never gif you mine ideas again!' said the poet, flashing up, and he went out and banged the door.

The labour-leader settled to his papers with a sigh of relief.

The relief was transient. A moment afterwards the door was slightly opened, and Pinchas's head was protruded through the aperture. The poet wore his most endearing smile; the finger was laid coaxingly against the nose.

'Just von leedle speech, Simon. Dink how I lofe you.'

'Oh, well, go away! I'll see,' replied Wolf, laughing amid all his annoyance.

The poet rushed in and kissed the hem of Wolf's coat.

'Oh, you be a great man!' he said. Then he walked out, closing the door gently. A moment afterwards the vision of the dusky head, with the carneying smile and the finger on the nose, reappeared.

'You von't forget your promise?' said the head.

'No, no. Go to the devil! I won't forget.'

Pinchas walked home through streets thronged with excited strikers discussing the

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situation with Oriental exuberance of gesture with anyone who would listen. The demands of these poor slop-hands (who could only count on six hours out of the twenty-four for themselves, and who, by the help of their wives and little ones in finishing, might earn a pound a week) were moderate enough—hours from eight to eight, with an hour for dinner and half an hour for tea, two shillings from the Government contractors for making a policeman's great-coat instead of one and ninepence halfpenny, and so on and so on. Their intentions were strictly peaceful. Every face was stamped with the marks of intellect and ill-health, the hue of a muddy pallor relieved by the flash of eyes and teeth. Their shoulders stooped, their chests were narrow, their arms flabby. They came in their hundreds to the hall at night. It was square-shaped with a stage and galleries, for a Jargon-company sometimes thrilled the Ghetto with tragedy and tickled it with farce. Both species were playing to-night, and in Jargon to boot. In real life you always get your drama mixed, and the sock of comedy galls the buskin of tragedy. It was an episode in the pitiful tussle of hunger and greed, yet its humours were grotesque enough.

Full as the hall was, it was not crowded, for it was Friday night, and a large contingent of

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strikers refused to desecrate the Sabbath by attending the meeting. But these were the zealots—Moses Ansell among them, for he, too, had struck. Having been out of work already, he had nothing to lose by augmenting the numerical importance of the agitation. The moderately pious argued that there was no financial business to transact, and attendance could hardly come under the denomination of work. It was rather analogous to attendance at a lecture; they would simply have to listen to speeches. Besides, it would be but a black Sabbath at home with a barren larder, and they had already been to synagogue. Thus degenerates ancient piety in the stress of modern social problems. Some of the men had not even changed their everyday face for their Sabbath countenance by washing it. Some wore collars and shiny thread-bare garments of dignified origin; others were unaffectedly poverty-stricken, with dingy shirt-cuffs peeping out of frayed sleeve-edges, and unhealthily coloured scarves folded complexly round their necks. A minority belonged to the free-thinking party, but the majority only availed themselves of Wolf's services because they were indispensable. For the moment he was the only possible leader, and they were sufficiently Jesuitic to use the devil himself for good ends.

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Though Wolf would not give up a Friday night meeting, especially valuable as permitting of the attendance of tailors who had not yet struck, Pinchas's politic advice had not failed to make an impression. Like so many reformers who have started with blatant atheism, he was beginning to see the insignificance of irreligious dissent as compared with the solution of the social problem, and Pinchas's seed had fallen on ready soil. As a labour-leader pure and simple, he could count upon a far larger following than as a preacher of militant impiety. He resolved to keep his atheism in the background for the future, and devote himself to the enfranchisement of the body before tampering with the soul. He was too proud ever to acknowledge his indebtedness to the poet's suggestion, but he felt grateful to him all the same.

'My brothers,' he said in Yiddish, when his turn came to speak, 'it pains me much to note how disunited we are. The capitalists, the Belcovitches, would rejoice if they but knew all that is going on. Have we not enemies enough that we must quarrel and split up into little factions among ourselves?' (Hear, hear.) 'How can we hope to succeed unless we are thoroughly organized? It has come to my ears that there are men who

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insinuate things even about me, and before I go on further to-night I wish to put this question to you.'

He paused and there was a breathless silence. The orator threw his chest forwards and, gazing fearlessly at the assembly, cried in a stentorian voice.

'*Sind sie zufrieden mit ihrer chairman?*'

His audacity made an impression. The discontented cowered timidly in their places.

'Yes,' rolled back from the assembly, proud of its English monosyllables.

'*Nein,*' cried a solitary voice from the topmost gallery. 'We are not satisfied with our chairman.'

Instantly the assembly was on its legs, eyeing the dissentient angrily. 'Get down! Go on the platform!' mingled with cries of 'Order!' from the chairman, who in vain summoned him on to the stage. The dissentient waved a roll of paper violently and refused to modify his standpoint. He was evidently speaking, for his jaws were making movements, which in the din and uproar could not rise above grimaces. There was a battered high hat on the back of his head, and his hair was uncombed and his face unwashed. At last silence was restored and the tirade became audible.

'Cursed sweaters! capitalists! stealing men's

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brains! leaving us to rot and starve in darkness and filth. Curse them! Curse them!' The speaker's voice rose to a hysterical scream as he rambled on.

Some of the men knew him, and soon there flew from lip to lip: 'Oh it's only *meshuggene Dovid.*'

Mad Davy was a gifted Russian university student, who had been mixed up with Nihilistic conspiracies and had fled to England, where the struggle to find employ for his clerical talents had addled his brain. He had a gift for chess and mechanical invention, and in the early days had saved himself from starvation by the sale of some ingenious patents to a swaggering co-religionist who owned racehorses and a music-hall, but he sank into squaring the circle and inventing perpetual motion. He lived now on the casual crumbs of indigent neighbours, for the charitable organizations had marked him 'dangerous.' He was a man of infinite loquacity, with an intense jealousy of Simon Wolf, or any such uninstructed person who assumed to lead the populace; but when the assembly accorded him his hearing he forgot the occasion of his rising, in a burst of passionate invective against society.

When the irrelevancy of his remarks became apparent he was rudely howled down and his

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neighbours pulled him into his seat, where he gibbered and mowed inaudibly.

Wolf continued his address:

'*Sind sie zufrieden mit ihrer secretary?*'

This time there was no dissent. The 'Yes' came like thunder.

'*Sind sie zufrieden mit ihrer treasurer?*'

Yeas and nays mingled. The question of the retention of the functionary was put to the vote. But there was much confusion, for the East End Jew is only slowly becoming a political animal. The ayes had it, but Wolf was not yet satisfied with the satisfaction of the gathering. He repeated the entire batch of questions in a new formula, so as to drive them home.

'*Hot aner etwas zu sagen gegen mir?*' Which is Yiddish for, 'Has anyone anything to say against me?'

'No!' came in a vehement roar.

'*Hot aner etwas zu sagen gegen dem secretary?*'

'No!'

'*Hot aner etwas zu sagen gegen dem treasurer?*'

'No!'

Having thus shown his grasp of logical exhaustiveness in a manner unduly exhausting to the more intelligent, Wolf consented to resume

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his oration. He had scored a victory, and triumph lent him added eloquence. When he ceased he left his audience in a frenzy of resolution and loyalty. In the flush of conscious power and freshly added influence, he found a niche for Pinchas's oratory.

'Brethren in exile,' said the poet in his best Yiddish.

Pinchas spoke German, which is an outlandish form of Yiddish and scarce understanded of the people, so that to be intelligible he had to divest himself of sundry inflexions and to throw gender to the winds, and to say 'wet' for 'wird' and mix hybrid Hebrew and ill-pronounced English with his vocabulary. There was some cheering as Pinchas tossed his dishevelled locks and addressed the gathering, for everybody to whom he had ever spoken knew that he was a wise and learned man and a great singer in Israel.

'Brethren in exile,' said the poet, 'the hour has come for laying the sweaters low. Singly we are sand-grains, together we are the simoom. Our great teacher Moses was the first Socialist. The legislation of the Old Testament, the land laws, the jubilee regulations, the tender care for the poor, the subordination of the rights of property to the

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interests of the working-man, all this is pure Socialism !'

The poet paused for the cheers, which came in a mighty volume. Few of those present knew what Socialism was, but all knew the word as a shibboleth of salvation from sweaters. Socialism meant shorter hours and higher wages, and was obtainable by marching with banners and brass bands—what need to inquire further ?

'In short,' pursued the poet, 'Socialism is Judaism, and Judaism is Socialism, and Karl Marx and Lassalle, the founders of Socialism, were Jews. Judaism does not bother with the next world ; it says : "Eat, drink, and be satisfied, and thank the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of Egypt from the land of bondage." But we have nothing to eat, we have nothing to drink, we have nothing to be satisfied with, we are still in the land of bondage.' (Cheers.) 'My brothers, how can we keep Judaism in a land where there is no Socialism ? We must become better Jews, we must bring on Socialism, for the period of Socialism on earth and of peace and plenty and brotherly love is what all our prophets and great teachers meant by Messiah-times.'

A little murmur of dissent rose here and there, but Pinchas went on :

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'When Hillel the Great summed up the law to the would-be proselyte while standing on one leg, how did he express it? "Do not unto others what you would not have others do unto you?" This is Socialism in a nutshell. Do not keep your riches for yourself; spread them abroad. Do not fatten on the labour of the poor, but share it. Do not eat the food others have earnt, but earn your own. Yes, brothers, the only true Jews in England are the Socialists. Phylacteries, praying-shawls—all nonsense! Work for Socialism—that pleases the Almighty. The Messiah will be a Socialist.'

There were mingled sounds, men asking each other dubiously, 'What says he?' They began to sniff brimstone. Wolf, shifting uneasily on his chair, kicked the poet's leg in reminder of his own warning. But Pinchas's head was touching the stars again. Mundane considerations were left behind somewhere in the depths of space below his feet.

'But how is the Messiah to redeem his people?' he asked. 'Not nowadays by the sword, but by the tongue. He will plead the cause of Judaism, the cause of Socialism, in Parliament. He will not come with mock miracle like Bar Cochba or Zevi. At the General Election, brothers, I will stand as the

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candidate for Whitechapel. I, a poor man, one of yourselves, will take my stand in that mighty assembly and touch the hearts of the legislators. They shall bend before my oratory as the bulrushes of the Nile when the wind passes. They will make me Prime Minister like Lord Beaconsfield, only he was no true lover of his people—he was not the Messiah. To hell with the rich bankers and the stockbrokers, we want them not! We will free ourselves.'

The extraordinary vigour of the poet's language and gestures told. Only half comprehending, the majority stamped and huzzahed. Pinchas swelled visibly. His slim lithe form, five and a quarter feet high, towered over the assembly. His complexion was as burnished copper; his eyes flashed flame.

'Yes, brethren,' he resumed, 'these Anglo-Jewish swine trample unheeding on the pearls of poetry and scholarship. They choose for ministers men with four mistresses; for Chief Rabbis hypocrites who cannot even write the Holy Tongue grammatically; for Dayanim men who sell their daughters to the rich; for members of Parliament stockbrokers who cannot speak English; for philanthropists greengrocers who embezzle funds. Let us have nothing to do with these swine—Moses our teacher forbade

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it.' (Laughter.) 'I will be the member for Whitechapel. See, my name Melchitzedek Pinchas already makes M.P.—it was fore-ordained. If every letter of the Torah has its special meaning, and none was put by chance, why should the finger of Heaven not have written my name thus: M.P.—Melchitzedek Pinchas? Ah! our brother Wolf speaks truth; wisdom issues from his lips. Put aside your petty quarrels, and unite in working for my election to Parliament. Thus, and thus only, shall you be redeemed from bondage, made from beasts of burden into men, from slaves to citizens, from false Jews to true Jews. Thus, and thus only, shall you eat, drink and be satisfied, and thank me for bringing you out of the land of bondage. Thus, and thus only, shall Judaism cover the world as the waters cover the sea.'

The fervid peroration overbalanced the audience, and from all sides except the platform applause warmed the poet's ears. He resumed his seat, and as he did so he automatically drew out a match and a cigar, and lit the one with the other. Instantly the applause dwindled, died; there was a moment of astonished silence, then a roar of execration. The bulk of the audience, as Pinchas, sober, had been shrewd enough to see, was still orthodox.

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This public profanation of the Sabbath by smoking was intolerable. How should the God of Israel aid the spread of Socialism, and the shorter hours movement, and the rise of prices a penny on a coat, if such devil's incense were borne to His nostrils? Their vague admiration of Pinchas changed into definite distrust. '*Epikouros, Epikouros, Meshumad!*' resounded from all sides. The poet looked wonderingly about him, failing to grasp the situation. Simon Wolf saw his opportunity. With an angry jerk he knocked the glowing cigar from between the poet's teeth. There was a yell of delight and approbation.

Wolf jumped to his feet. 'Brothers,' he roared, 'you know I am not *froom;* but I will not have anybody else's feelings trampled upon.' So saying, he ground the cigar under his heel.

Immediately an abortive blow from the poet's puny arm swished the air. Pinchas was roused, the veins on his forehead swelled, his heart thumped rapidly in his bosom. Wolf shook his knobby fist laughingly at the poet, who made no further effort to use any other weapon of offence but his tongue.

'Hypocrite!' he shrieked. 'Liar! Machiavelli! Child of the separation! A black year on thee! An evil spirit in thy bones,

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and in the bones of thy father and mother! Thy father was a proselyte, and thy mother an abomination. The curses of Deuteronomy light on thee! Mayst thou become covered with boils like Job! And you,' he added, turning on the audience, 'pack of Men-of-the-Earth! stupid animals! how much longer will you bend your neck to the yoke of superstition, while your bellies are empty? Who says I shall not smoke? Was tobacco known to Moses our teacher? If so, he would have enjoyed it on the Shabbos — he was a wise man like me. Did the Rabbis know of it? No, fortunately, else they were so stupid they would have forbidden it. You are all so ignorant that you think not of these things. Can anyone show me where it stands that we must not smoke on Shabbos? Is not Shabbos a day of rest, and how can we rest if we smoke not? I believe, with the Baalshem, that God is more pleased when I smoke my cigar than at the prayers of all the stupid Rabbis. How dare you rob me of my cigar—is that keeping Shabbos?'

He turned back to Wolf, and tried to push his foot from off the cigar. There was a brief struggle. A dozen men leapt on the platform, and dragged the poet away from his convulsive clasp of the labour-leader's leg. A few

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opponents of Wolf on the platform cried, 'Let the man alone; give him his cigar!' and thrust themselves amongst the invaders. The hall was in tumult. From the gallery the voice of Mad Davy resounded again:

'Cursed sweaters! stealing men's brains! darkness and filth! Curse them! Blow them up, as we blew up Alexander! Curse them!'

Pinchas was carried, shrieking hysterically, and striving to bite the arms of his bearers, through the tumultuous crowd, amid a little ineffective opposition, and deposited outside the door.

Wolf made another speech, sealing the impression he had made. Then the poor narrow-chested men went home through the cold air to recite the Song of Solomon in their stuffy hovels and back-rooms and garrets. 'Behold, thou art fair, my love,' they intoned in a strange chant. 'Behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our couch is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters are fir. . . . For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear upon the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. . . . Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, calamus,

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cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloe, with all the chief spices; a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon. . . . Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.'

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CHAPTER XX.

THE HOPE EXTINCT.

THE strike came to an end soon after. To the delight of Melchitzedek Pinchas, Gideon M.P. intervened at the eleventh hour, unceremoniously elbowing Simon Wolf out of his central position. A compromise was arranged, and jubilance and tranquillity reigned for some months, till the corruptions of competitive human nature brought back the old state of things, for employers have quite a diplomatic reverence for treaties and the brotherly love of employés breaks down under the strain of supporting families. Rather to his own surprise, Moses Ansell found himself in work at least three days a week, the other three being spent in hanging round the workshop waiting for it. It is an uncertain trade, is the manufacture of slops, which was all Moses was fitted for, but if you are not at hand you may miss the 'work' when it does come.

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It never rains but it pours, and so more luck came to the garret of No. 1, Royal Street. Esther won five pounds at school. It was the Henry Goldsmith prize, a new annual prize for general knowledge instituted by a lady named Mrs. Henry Goldsmith, who had just joined the committee, and the semi-divine person herself, a surpassingly beautiful, radiant being, like a princess in a fairy tale, personally congratulated her upon her success. The money was not available for a year, but the neighbours hastened to congratulate the family on its rise to wealth. Even Levi Jacobs's visits became more frequent, though this could scarcely be ascribed to mercenary motives.

The Belcovitches recognised their improved status so far as to send to borrow some salt; for the colony of No. 1, Royal Street carried on an extensive system of mutual accommodation, coals, potatoes, chunks of bread, saucepans, needles, wood-choppers, all passing daily to and fro. Even garments and jewellery were lent on great occasions, and when that dear old soul Mrs. Simons went to a wedding, she was decked out in contributions from a dozen wardrobes. The Ansells themselves were too proud to borrow, though they were not above lending.

It was early morning, and Moses in his big

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phylacteries was droning his orisons. His mother had had an attack of spasms, and so he was praying at home to be at hand in case of need. Everybody was up, and Moses was superintending the household even while he was gabbling psalms. He never minded breaking off his intercourse with Heaven to discuss domestic affairs, for he was on free-and-easy terms with the powers that be, and there was scarce a prayer in the liturgy which he would not interrupt to reprimand Solomon for lack of absorption in the same. The exception was the *Amidah*, or Eighteen Blessings, so called because there are twenty-two. This section must be said standing and inaudibly, and when Moses was engaged upon it a message from an earthly monarch would have extorted no reply from him. There were other sacred silences which Moses would not break save of dire necessity, and then only by talking Hebrew; but the *Amidah* was the silence of silences. This was why the utterly unprecedented arrival of a telegraph boy did not move him. Not even Esther's cry of alarm when she opened the telegram had any visible effect upon him, though in reality he whispered off his prayer at a record-beating rate, and duly danced three times on his toes with spasmodic celerity at the finale.

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'Father,' said Esther, the never-before-received species of letter trembling in her hand, 'we must go at once to see Benjy. He is very ill.'

'Has he written to say so?'

'No; this is a telegram. I have read of such. Oh, perhaps he is dead! It is always so in books. They break the news by saying the dead are still alive.'

Her tones died away in a sob. The children clustered round her; Rachel and Solomon fought for the telegram in their anxiety to read it. Ikey and Sarah stood grave and interested. The sick grandmother sat up in bed excited.

'He never showed me his "four-corners,"' she moaned. 'Perhaps he did not wear the fringes at all.'

'Father, dost thou hear?' said Esther, for Moses Ansell was fingering the russet envelope with a dazed air. 'We must go to the Orphanage at once.'

'Read it! What stands in the letter?' said Moses Ansell.

She took the message from the hands of Solomon.

'It stands: "Come up at once. Your son Benjamin very ill."'

'Tu! tu! tu!' clucked Moses. 'The poor child! But how can we go up? Thou canst

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not walk there. It will take *me* more than three hours.'

His praying-shawl slid from his shoulders in his agitation.

'Thou must not walk, either!' cried Esther excitedly. 'We must get to him at once! Who knows if he will be alive when we come? We must go by train from London Bridge the way Benjy came that Sunday. Oh, my poor Benjy!'

'Give me back the paper, Esther,' interrupted Solomon, taking it from her limp hand. 'The boys have never seen a telegram.'

'But we cannot spare the money,' urged Moses helplessly. 'We have just enough money to get along with to-day. Solomon, go on with thy prayers; thou seizest every excuse to interrupt them. Rachel, go away from him; thou art also a disturbing Satan to him. I do not wonder his teacher flogged him black and blue yesterday; he is a stubborn and rebellious son who should be stoned, according to Deuteronomy.'

'We must do without dinner,' said Esther impulsively.

Sarah sat down on the floor and howled, 'Woe is me! woe is me!'

'I didden touch 'er,' cried Ikey in indignant bewilderment.

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'Tain't Ikey!' sobbed Sarah. 'Little Tharah wants 'er dinner.'

'Thou hearest?' said Moses pitifully. 'How can we spare the money?'

'How much is it?' asked Esther.

'It will be a shilling each there and back,' replied Moses, who from his long periods of peregrination was a connoisseur in fares. 'How can we afford it when I lose a morning's work into the bargain?'

'No, what talkest thou?' said Esther. 'Thou art looking a few months ahead—thou deemest, perhaps, I am already twelve. It will only be sixpence for me.'

Moses did not disclaim the implied compliment to his rigid honesty, but answered:

'Where is my head? Of course, thou goest half-price. But even so where is the eighteenpence to come from?'

'But it is not eighteenpence!' ejaculated Esther with a new inspiration. Necessity was sharpening her wits to extraordinary acuteness. 'We need not take return-tickets. We can walk back.'

'But we cannot be so long away from the mother—both of us,' said Moses. 'She, too, is ill. And how will the children do without thee? I will go by myself.'

'No; I must see Benjy!' Esther cried.

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'Be not so stiff-necked, Esther! Besides, it stands in the letter that I am to come—they do not ask thee. Who knows that the great people will not be angry if I bring thee with me? I dare say Benjamin will soon be better. He cannot have been ill long.'

'But quick, then, father, quick!' cried Esther, yielding to the complex difficulties of the position. 'Go at once!'

'Immediately, Esther. Wait only till I have finished my prayers. I am nearly done.'

'No! no!' cried Esther, agonized. 'Thou prayest so much, God will let thee off a little bit, just for once. Thou must go at once, and ride both ways—else how shall we know what has happened? I will pawn my new prize, and that will give thee money enough.'

'Good!' said Moses. 'While thou art pledging the book, I shall have time to finish praying.' He hitched up his *Talith*, and commenced to gabble off: '"Happy are those who dwell in Thy house; ever shall they praise Thee—Selah,"' and was already saying, '"And a Redeemer shall come unto Zion,"' by the time Esther rushed out through the door with the pledge. It was a gaudily-bound volume, called 'Treasures of Science'; and Esther knew it almost by heart, having read

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it twice from gilt cover to gilt cover. All the same, she would miss it sorely.

The pawnbroker lived only round the corner, for, like the publican, he springs up wherever the conditions are favourable. He was a Christian. By a curious anomaly the Ghetto does not supply its own pawnbrokers, but sends them out to the provinces or the West End. Perhaps the business instinct dreads the solicitation of the racial.

Esther's pawnbroker was a rubicund, portly man. He knew the fortunes of a hundred families by the things left with him or taken back. It was on his stuffy shelves that poor Benjamin's coat had lain compressed and packed away, when it might have had a beautiful airing in the grounds of the Crystal Palace. It was from his stuffy shelves that Esther's mother had redeemed it, a day after the fair—soon to be herself compressed and packed away in a pauper's coffin, awaiting in silence whatsoever Redemption might be. The 'best coat' itself had long since been sold to a ragman ; for Solomon, upon whose back it devolved when Benjamin was so happily translated, could never be got to keep a best coat longer than a year, and when a best coat is degraded to everyday wear its attrition is much more than six times as rapid.

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'Good-mornen, my little dear,' said the rubicund man. 'You're early this mornen.' The apprentice had, indeed, only just taken down the shutters. 'What can I do for you to-day? You look pale, my dear; what's the matter?'

'I have a bran-new seven-and-sixpenny book,' she answered hurriedly, passing it to him.

He turned instinctively to the fly-leaf.

'Bran-new book!' he said contemptuously. '"Esther Ansell—for improvement"! When a book's spiled like that, what can you expect for it?'

'Why, it's the inscription that makes it valuable,' said Esther tearfully.

'Maybe,' said the rubicund man gruffly. 'But d'yer suppose I should just find a buyer named Esther Ansell? Do you suppose everybody in the world's named Esther Ansell, or is capable of improvement?'

'No,' breathed Esther dolefully. 'But I shall take it out myself soon.'

'In this world,' said the rubicund man, shaking his head sceptically, 'there ain't never no knowing. Well, how much d'yer want?'

'I only want a shilling,' said Esther, 'and threepence,' she added as a happy thought.

'All right,' said the rubicund man, softened;

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'I won't 'aggle this mornen. You look quite knocked up. Here you are!'

And Esther darted out of the shop, with the money clasped tightly in her palm.

Moses had folded his phylacteries with pious primness, and put them away in a little bag, and he was hastily swallowing a cup of coffee.

'Here is the shilling,' she cried, 'and twopence extra for the 'bus to London Bridge. Quick!'

She put the ticket away carefully among its companions, in a discoloured leather purse her father had once picked up in the street, and hurried him off. When his step ceased on the stairs, she yearned to run after him and go with him; but Ikey was clamouring for breakfast, and the children had to run off to school. She remained at home herself, for the grandmother groaned heavily. When the other children had gone off, she tidied up the vacant bed and smoothed the old woman's pillows. Suddenly Benjamin's reluctance to have his father exhibited before his new companions recurred to her. She hoped Moses would not be needlessly obtrusive, and felt that if she had gone with him she might have supplied tact in this direction. She reproached herself for not having made him a bit more presentable. She should have spared another halfpenny for a new collar,

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and seen that he was washed. But in the rush and alarm all thoughts of propriety had been submerged.

Then her thoughts went off at a tangent, and she saw her class-room, where new things were being taught, and new marks gained. It galled her to think she was missing both.

She felt so lonely in the company of her grandmother, she could have gone downstairs and cried on Dutch Debby's musty lap. Then she strove to picture the room where Benjy was lying, but her imagination lacked the data. She would not let herself think the brilliant Benjamin was dead, that he would be sewn up in a shroud just like his poor mother, who had no literary talent whatever; but she wondered whether he was groaning like the grandmother. And so, half distracted, pricking up her ears at the slightest creak on the stairs, Esther waited for news of her Benjy. The hours dragged on and on, and the children coming home at one found dinner ready, but Esther still waiting. A dusty sunbeam streamed in through the garret window as though to give her hope.

Benjamin had been beguiled from his books into an unaccustomed game of ball in the cold March air. He had taken off his jacket, and had got very hot with his unwonted exertions. A reactionary chill followed. Benjamin had a

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slight cold, which, being ignored, developed rapidly into a heavy one, still without inducing the energetic lad to ask to be put upon the sick-list. Was not the publishing day of *Our Own* at hand ?

The cold became graver with the same rapidity, and almost as soon as the boy had made complaint he was in a high fever, and the official doctor declared that pneumonia had set in. In the night Benjamin was delirious, and the nurse summoned the doctor, and next morning his condition was so critical that his father was telegraphed for. There was little to be done by science ; all depended on the patient's constitution. Alas ! the four years of plenty and country breezes had not counteracted the eight and three-quarter years of privation and foul air, especially in a lad more intent on emulating Dickens and Thackeray than on profiting by the advantages of his situation.

When Moses arrived, he found his boy tossing restlessly in a little bed, in a private little room away from the great dormitories. The 'matron,' a sweet-faced young lady, was bending tenderly over him, and a nurse sat at the bedside. The doctor stood, waiting, at the foot of the bed. Moses took his boy's hand. The matron silently stepped aside. Benjamin stared at him with wide, unrecognising eyes.

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'*Nu*—how goes it, Benjamin?' cried Moses, in Yiddish, with mock heartiness.

'Thank you, Old Four-Eyes. It's very good of you to come. I always said there mustn't be any hits at you in the paper. I always told the fellows you were a very decent chap.'

'What says he?' asked Moses, turning to the company. 'I cannot understand English.'

They could not understand his own question; but the matron guessed it. She tapped her forehead and shook her head for reply. Benjamin closed his eyes, and there was silence. Presently he opened them and looked straight at his father. A deeper crimson mantled on the flushed cheek, as Benjamin beheld the dingy, stooping being to whom he owed birth. Moses wore a dirty red scarf below his untrimmed beard; his clothes were greasy, his face had not yet been washed, and, for a climax, he had not removed his hat, which other considerations than those of etiquette should have impelled him to keep out of sight.

'I thought you were Old Four-Eyes,' the boy murmured in confusion. 'Wasn't he here just now?'

'Go and fetch Mr. Coleman,' said the matron to the nurse, half smiling through tears at her own knowledge of the teacher's nickname, and

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wondering what endearing term she was herself known by.

'Cheer up, Benjamin!' said his father, seeing his boy had become sensible of his presence. 'Thou wilt be all right soon. Thou hast been much worse than this.'

'What does he say?' asked Benjamin, turning his eyes towards the matron.

'He says he is sorry to see you so bad,' said the matron at a venture.

'But I shall be up soon, won't I? I can't have *Our Own* delayed,' whispered Benjamin.

'Don't worry about *Our Own*, my poor boy,' murmured the matron, pressing his forehead. Moses respectfully made way for her.

'What says he?' he asked. The matron repeated the words, but Moses could not understand the English.

Old Four-Eyes arrived—a mild spectacled young man. He looked at the doctor, and the doctor's eye told him all.

'Ah, Mr. Coleman,' said Benjamin with joyous huskiness, 'you'll see that *Our Own* comes out this week as usual. Tell Jack Simmonds he must not forget to rule black lines round the page containing Bruno's epitaph. Bony-nose—I—I mean Mr. Bernstein—wrote it for us in dog-Latin. Isn't it a lark? Thick

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black lines, tell him. He was a good dog, and only bit one boy in his life.'

'All right; I'll see to it,' Old Four-Eyes assured him with answering huskiness.

'What says he?' helplessly inquired Moses, addressing himself to the new-comer.

'Isn't it a sad case, Mr. Coleman?' said the matron in a low tone. 'They can't understand each other.'

'You ought to keep an interpreter on the premises,' said the doctor, blowing his nose. Coleman struggled with himself. He knew the jargon to perfection, for his parents spoke it still, but he had always posed as being ignorant of it.

'Tell my father to go home, and not to bother; I'm all right—only a little weak,' whispered Benjamin.

Coleman was deeply perturbed. He was wondering whether he should plead guilty to a little knowledge, when a change of expression came over the wan face on the pillow. The doctor came and felt the boy's pulse.

'No; I don't want to hear that *Maaseh!*' cried Benjamin. 'Tell me about the Sambatyon, father, which refuses to flow on Shabbos.'

He spoke Yiddish, grown a child again. Moses's face lit up with joy. His eldest-born had returned to intelligibility. There was hope

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still, then. A sudden burst of sunshine flooded the room. In London the sun would not break through the clouds for some hours. Moses leaned over the pillow, his face working with blended emotions. He let a hot tear fall on his boy's upturned face.

'Hush, hush, my little Benjamin, don't cry!' said Benjamin, and began to sing in his mother's jargon:

'"*Sleep, little father, sleep:*
Thy father shall be a Rav;
Thy mother shall bring little apples;
Blessings on thy little head!"'

Moses saw his dead Gittel lulling his boy to sleep. Blinded by his tears, he did not see that they were falling thick upon the little white face.

'Nay, dry thy tears, I tell thee, my little Benjamin!' said Benjamin in tones more tender and soothing, and launched into the strange wailing melody:

'"*Alas, woe is me!*
How wretched to be
Driven away and banished,
Yet so young, from thee!"'

'And Joseph's mother called to him from the grave. Be comforted, my son; a great future shall be thine.'

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'The end is near,' Old Four-Eyes whispered to the father in jargon.

Moses trembled from head to foot. 'My poor lamb! My poor Benjamin!' he wailed. 'I thought thou wouldst say *Kaddish* after me, not I for thee!' Then he began to recite quietly the Hebrew prayers. The hat he should have removed was appropriate enough now.

Benjamin sat up excitedly in bed.

'There's mother, Esther!' he cried in English, 'coming back with my coat. But what's the use of it now?'

His head fell back again. Presently a look of yearning came over the face so full of boyish beauty.

'Esther,' he said, 'wouldn't you like to be in the green country to-day? Look how the sun shines!'

It shone indeed, with deceptive warmth, bathing in gold the green country that stretched beyond, and dazzling the eyes of the dying boy. The birds twittered outside the window.

'Esther,' he said wistfully, 'do you think there'll be another funeral soon?'

The matron burst into tears and turned away.

'Benjamin,' cried the father frantically, thinking the end had come, 'say the *Shemang*.'

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The boy stared at him, a clearer look in his eyes.

'Say the *Shemang!*' said Moses peremptorily.

The word *Shemang,* the old authoritative tone, penetrated the consciousness of the dying boy.

'Yes, father, I was just going to,' he grumbled submissively.

They repeated the last declaration of the dying Israelite together. It was in Hebrew. '"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."' Both understood that.

Benjamin lingered on a few more minutes, and died in a painless torpor.

'He is dead,' said the doctor.

'Blessed be the True Judge,' said Moses. He rent his coat and closed the staring eyes. Then he went to the toilette-table and turned the looking-glass to the wall, and opened the window and emptied the jug of water upon the green sunlit grass.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE JARGON PLAYERS.

'No, don't stop me, Pinchas!' said Gabriel Hamburg. 'I'm packing up, and I shall spend my Passover in Stockholm. The Chief Rabbi there has discovered a manuscript which I am anxious to see, and as I have saved up a little money, I shall speed thither.'

'Ah, he pays well, that boy-fool, Raphael Leon,' said Pinchas, emitting a lazy ring of smoke. They spoke in German.

'What do you mean?' cried Gabriel, flushing angrily. 'Do you mean, perhaps, that *you* have been getting money out of him?'

'Precisely. That is what I *do* mean,' said the poet naïvely. 'What else?'

'Well, don't let me hear you call him a fool. He *is* one to send you money, but then it is for others to call him so. That boy will be a great man in Israel. The son of rich English Jews—

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a Harrow boy—yet he already writes Hebrew almost grammatically.'

Pinchas was aware of this fact; had he not written to the lad (in response to a crude Hebrew eulogium and a crisp Bank of England note): 'I and thou are the only two people in England who write the Holy Tongue grammatically'?

To Hamburg he replied now: 'It is true; soon he will vie with me and you.'

The old scholar took snuff impatiently. The humours of Pinchas were beginning to pall upon him.

'Good-bye,' he said again.

'No, wait yet a little,' said Pinchas, button-holing him resolutely. 'I want to show you my acrostic on Simon Wolf—ah! I will shoot him, the miserable labour-leader, the wretch who embezzles the money of the Socialist fools who trust him. Aha! it will sting like Juvenal, that acrostic.'

'I haven't time,' said the gentle savant, beginning to lose his temper.

'Well, have I time? I have to compose a three-act comedy by to-morrow at noon. I expect I shall have to sit up all night to get it done in time.' Then, anxious to complete the conciliation of the old snuff-and-pepper-box, as he mentally christened him for his next acrostic,

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he added: 'If there is anything in this manuscript that you cannot decipher or understand, a letter to me, care of Reb Shemuel, will always find me. Somehow, I have a special genius for filling up lacunæ in manuscripts. You remember the famous discovery that I made by rewriting the six lines torn out of the first page of that Midrash I discovered in Cyprus?'

'Yes; those six lines proved it thoroughly,' sneered the savant.

'Aha, you see,' said the poet, a gratified childish smile pervading his dusky features. 'But I must tell you of this comedy: it will be a satirical picture (in the style of Molière, only sharper) of Anglo-Jewish society. The Rev. Elkan Benjamin, with his four mistresses, they will be all there; and Gideon, the Man-of-the-Earth M.P.—ah, it will be terrible! If I could only get them to see it performed they should have free passes!'

'No, shoot them first; it would be more merciful. But where is this comedy to be played?' asked Hamburg curiously.

'At the Jargon Theatre, the great theatre in Princes' Street, the only real national theatre in England. The English stage—Drury Lane—pooh! It is not in harmony with the people; it does not express them.'

Hamburg could not help smiling. He

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knew the wretched little hall, since tragically famous for a massacre of innocents, victims to the fatal cry of 'Fire!'—more deadly than fiercest flame.

'But how will your audience understand it?' he asked.

'Aha!' said the poet, laying his finger on his nose and grinning, 'they will understand. They know the corruptions of our society. All this conspiracy to crush me, to hound me out of England, so that ignoramuses may prosper and hypocrites wax fat—do you think it is not the talk of the Ghetto? What! shall it be the talk of Berlin, of Constantinople, of Mogadore, of Jerusalem, of Paris, and here it shall not be known? Besides the leading actress will speak a prologue. Ah, she is beautiful: beautiful as Lilith, as the Queen of Sheba, as Cleopatra! And how she acts! She and Rachel—both Jewesses! Think of it! Ah, we are a great people! If I could tell you the secrets of her eyes as she looks at me; but no, you are dry as dust, a creature of prose! And there will be an orchestra, too, for Pesach Weingott has promised to play the overture on his fiddle. How he stirs the soul! It is like David playing before Saul.'

'Yes, but it won't be javelins the people will throw,' murmured Hamburg, adding aloud:

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'I suppose you have written the music of this overture.'

'No, I cannot write music,' said Pinchas.

'Good heavens! you don't say so?' gasped Gabriel Hamburg. 'Let that be my last recollection of you. No; don't say another word! Don't spoil it! Good-bye.' And he tore himself away, leaving the poet bewildered.

'Mad, mad!' said Pinchas, tapping his brow significantly. 'Mad, the old snuff-and-pepper-box!' He smiled at the recollection of his latest phrase. 'These scholars stagnate so; they see not enough of the women. Ha! I will go and see my actress.'

He threw out his chest, puffed out a volume of smoke, and took his way to Petticoat Lane. The compatriot of Rachel was wrapping up a scrag of mutton. She was a butcher's daughter, and did not even wield the chopper as Mrs. Siddons is reputed to have flourished the domestic table-knife. She was a simple amiable girl, who had stepped into the position of lead in the stock Jargon company as a way of eking out her pocket-money, and because there was no one else who wanted the post. She was rather plain except when be-rouged and be-pencilled. The company included several tailors and tailoresses of talent, and the

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low comedian was a Dutchman who sold herrings. They all had the gift of improvisation more developed than memory, and consequently availed themselves of the faculty that worked easier. The repertory was written by goodness knew whom, and was very extensive. It embraced all the species enumerated by Polonius, including comic opera, which was not known to the Danish saw-monger. There was nothing the company would not have undertaken to play, or have come out of without a fair measure of success. Some of the plays were on Biblical subjects, but only a minority. There were also plays in rhyme, though Yiddish knows not blank verse.

Melchitzedek accosted his interpretress and made sheep's-eyes at her. But an actress who serves in a butcher's shop is doubly accustomed to such, and, being busy, the girl paid no attention to the poet, though the poet was paying marked attention to her.

'Kiss me, thou beauteous one, the gems of whose crown are footlights,' said the poet, when the custom ebbed for a moment.

'If thou comest near me,' said the actress, whirling the chopper, 'I'll chop thy ugly little head off.'

'Unless thou lendest me thy lips thou shalt not play in my comedy,' cried Pinchas angrily.

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'*My* trouble!' said the leading lady, shrugging her shoulders.

Pinchas made several reappearances outside the open shop, with his insinuative finger on his nose, and his insinuative smile on his face, but in the end went away with a flea in his ear and hunted up the actor-manager, the only person who made any money to speak of out of the performances. That gentleman had not yet consented to produce the play that Pinchas had ready in manuscript, and which had been coveted by all the great theatres in the world, but which he, Pinchas, had reserved for the use of the only actor in Europe. The result of this interview was that the actor-manager yielded to Pinchas's solicitations, backed by frequent applications of poetic finger to poetic nose.

'But,' said the actor-manager with a sudden recollection, 'how about the besom?'

'The besom?' repeated Pinchas, nonplussed for once.

'Yes; thou sayest thou hast seen all the plays I have produced. Hast thou not noticed that I have a besom in all my plays?'

'Aha! Yes, I remember,' said Pinchas.

'An old garden-besom it is,' said the actor-manager. 'And it is the cause of all my luck.' He took up a house-broom that stood in the

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corner. 'In comedy I sweep the floor with it, so, and the people grin; in comic opera I beat time with it as I sing, so, and the people laugh; in farce I beat my mother-in-law with it, so, and the people roar; in tragedy I lean upon it, so, and the people thrill; in melodrama I sweep away the snow with it, so, and the people burst into tears. Usually I have my plays written beforehand, and the authors are aware of the besom. Dost thou think,' he concluded doubtfully, 'that thou hast sufficient ingenuity to work in the besom now that the play is written?'

Pinchas put his finger to his nose and smiled reassuringly.

'It shall be all besom,' he said.

'And when wilt thou read it to me?'

'Will to-morrow this time suit thee?'

'As honey a bear.'

'Good, then!' said Pinchas. 'I shall not fail.'

The door closed upon him; in another moment it re-opened a bit and he thrust his grinning face through the aperture.

'Ten per cent. of the receipts!' he said with his cajoling digito-nasal gesture.

'Certainly,' rejoined the actor-manager briskly. 'After paying the expenses, ten per cent. of the receipts.'

'Thou wilt not forget?'

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'I shall not forget.'

Pinchas strode forth into the street and lit a new cigar in his exultation. How lucky the play was not yet written! Now he would be able to make it all turn round the axis of the besom. 'It shall be all besom!' His own phrase rang in his ears like voluptuous marriage bells. Yes, it should indeed be all besom; with that besom he would sweep all his enemies —all the foul conspirators—in one clean sweep down, down to Sheol. He would sweep them along the floor with it, so, and grin; he would beat time to their yells of agony, so, and laugh; he would beat them over the heads, so, and roar; he would lean upon it in statuesque greatness, so, and thrill; he would sweep away their remains with it, so, and weep for joy of countermining and quelling the long persecution.

All night he wrote the play at railway speed, like a night express, puffing out volumes of smoke as he panted along. 'I dip my pen in their blood,' he said from time to time, and threw back his head and laughed aloud in the silence of the small-hours.

Pinchas had a good deal to do to explain the next day to the actor-manager where the fun came in. 'Thou dost not grasp all the allusions, the backhanded slaps, the hidden poniards—perhaps not,' the author acknow-

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ledged. 'But the great heart of the people—it will understand.'

The actor-manager was unconvinced, but he admitted there was a good deal of besom, and in consideration of the poet bating his terms to five per cent. of the receipts he agreed to give it a chance. The piece was billed widely in several streets under the title of 'The Hornet of Judah,' and the name of Melchitzedek Pinchas appeared in letters of the size stipulated by the finger on the nose.

But the leading actress threw up her part at the last moment, disgusted by the poet's amorous advances; Pinchas volunteered to play the part himself, and, although his offer was rejected, he attired himself in skirts and streaked his complexion with red and white to replace the promoted second actress, and shaved off his beard.

But in spite of this heroic sacrifice the gods were unpropitious. They chaffed the poet in polished Yiddish throughout the first two acts. There was only a sprinkling of audience (most of it paper) in the dimly-lit hall, for the fame of the great writer had not yet spread from Berlin, Mogadore, Constantinople, and the rest of the universe.

No one could make head or tail of the piece, with its incessant play of occult satire against

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clergymen with four mistresses, Rabbis who sold their daughters, stockbrokers ignorant of Hebrew and destitute of English, greengrocers blowing Messianic and their own trumpets, labour-leaders embezzling funds, and the like. In vain the actor-manager swept the floor with the besom, beat time with the besom, beat his mother-in-law with the besom, leaned on the besom, swept bits of white paper with the besom. The hall, empty of its usual crowd, was fuller of derisive laughter. At last the spectators tired of laughter, and the rafters re-echoed with hoots. At the end of the second act Melchitzedek Pinchas addressed the audience from the stage, in his ample petticoats, his brow streaming with paint and perspiration. He spoke of the great English conspiracy, and expressed his grief and astonishment at finding it had infected the entire Ghetto.

There was no third act. It was the poet's first, and last, appearance on any stage.

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CHAPTER XXII.

'FOR AULD LANG SYNE, MY DEAR.'

THE learned say that Passover was a Spring Festival even before it was associated with the Redemption from Egypt, but there is not much nature to worship in the Ghetto, and the historical elements of the Festival swamp all the others. Passover still remains the most picturesque of the 'Three Festivals,' with its entire transmogrification of things culinary, its thorough taboo of leaven. The audacious archæologist of the thirtieth century may trace back the origin of the Festival to the spring-cleaning, the annual revel of the English housewife, for it is now that the Ghetto whitewashes itself, and scrubs itself, and paints itself, and pranks itself, and purifies its pans in a baptism of fire. Now, too, the publican gets unto himself a white sheet, and suspends it at his door, and proclaims that he sells *Kosher rum* by permission of the Chief Rabbi. Now the confectioner

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exchanges his 'stuffed monkeys,' and his bolas, and his jam-puffs, and his cheese-cakes, for unleavened 'palavas,' and worsted balls, and almond cakes. Time was when the Passover dietary was restricted to fruit and meat and vegetables, but year by year the circle is expanding, and it should not be beyond the reach of ingenuity to make bread itself Passoverian. It is now that the pious shopkeeper whose store is tainted with leaven sells his business to a friendly Christian, buying it back at the conclusion of the Festival. Now the Shalotten Shammos is busy from morning to night filling up charity-forms, artistically multiplying the poor man's children and dividing his rooms. Now is holocaust made of a people's bread-crumbs, and now is the national salutation changed to 'How do the *Motsos* agree with you?' half of the race growing facetious, and the other half finical, over the spotted Passover cakes.

It was on the evening preceding the opening of Passover that Esther Ansell set forth to purchase a shilling's-worth of fish in Petticoat Lane, involuntarily storing up in her mind vivid impressions of the bustling scene. It is one of the compensations of poverty that it allows no time for mourning. Daily duty is the poor man's nepenthe.

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Esther and her father were the only two members of the family upon whom the death of Benjamin made a deep impression. He had been so long away from home that he was the merest shadow to the rest. But Moses bore the loss with resignation, his emotions discharging themselves in the daily *Kaddish*. Blent with his personal grief was a sorrow for the commentaries lost to Hebrew literature by his boy's premature transference to Paradise. Esther's grief was more bitter and defiant. All the children were delicate, but it was the first time death had taken one. The meaningless tragedy of Benjamin's end shook the child's soul to its depths. Poor lad! How horrible to be lying cold and ghastly beneath the winter snow! What had been the use of all his long preparations to write great novels? The name of Ansell would now become ingloriously extinct. She wondered whether *Our Own* would collapse, and secretly felt it must. And then what of the hopes of worldly wealth she had built on Benjamin's genius? Alas! the emancipation of the Ansells from the yoke of poverty was clearly postponed. To her, and her alone, must the family now look for deliverance. Well, she would take up the mantle of the dead boy and fill it as best she might. She clenched her little hands in iron determination. Moses

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Ansell knew nothing either of her doubts or her ambitions. Work was still plentiful three days a week, and he was unconscious he was not supporting his family in comparative affluence. But even with Esther the incessant grind of school-life and quasi-motherhood speedily rubbed away the sharper edges of sorrow, though the custom prohibiting obvious pleasures during the year of mourning went in no danger of transgression, for poor little Esther gadded neither to children's balls nor to theatres. Her thoughts were full of the prospects of piscine bargains as she pushed her way through a crowd so closely wedged, and lit up by such a flare of gas from the shops and such streamers of flame from the barrows, that the cold wind of early April lost its sting.

Two opposing currents of heavy-laden pedestrians were endeavouring in their progress to occupy the same strip of pavement at the same moment, and the laws of space kept them blocked till they yielded to its remorseless conditions. Rich and poor elbowed one another; ladies in satins and furs were jammed against wretched-looking foreign women with their heads swathed in dirty handkerchiefs; rough, red-faced English betting-men struggled good-humouredly with their greasy kindred from over the North Sea; and a sprinkling of Chris-

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tian yokels surveyed the Jewish hucksters and chapmen with amused superiority.

For this was the night of nights, when the purchases were made for the Festival, and great ladies of the West, leaving behind their daughters who played the piano and had a subscription at Mudie's, came down again to the beloved Lane to throw off the veneer of refinement, and plunge gloveless hands in barrels where pickled cucumbers weltered in their own *Russel*, and to pick fat juicy olives from the rich-heaped tubs. Ah me! what tragi-comedy lay behind the transient happiness of these sensuous faces, laughing and munching with the shamelessness of school-girls! For to-night they need not hanker in silence after the flesh-pots of Egypt. To-night they could laugh and talk over *Olov Hasholom* times—'Peace be upon him!' times—with their old cronies, and loosen the stays of social ambition, even while they dazzled the Ghetto with the splendours of their get-up and the halo of the West End whence they came. It was a scene without parallel in the history of the world—this phantasmagoria of grubs and butterflies, met together for auld lang syne in their beloved hatching-place. Such violent contrasts of wealth and poverty as might be looked for in romantic gold-fields or in unsettled countries

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were evolved quite naturally amid a colourless civilization by a people with an incurable talent for the picturesque.

'Hullo! Can that be you, Betsy?' some grizzled, shabby old man would observe in innocent delight to Mrs. Arthur Montmorenci. 'Why, so it is; I never would have believed my eyes! Lord, what a fine woman you've grown! And so you're little Betsy who used to bring her father's coffee in a brown jug when he and I stood side by side in the Lane! He used to sell slippers next to my cutlery stall for eleven years. Dear, dear, how time flies, to be sure!'

Then Betsy Montmorenci's creamy face would grow scarlet under the gas-jets, and she would glower and draw her sables round her and look round involuntarily, to see if any Kensington friends were within ear-shot.

Another Betsy Montmorenci would feel Bohemian for this occasion only, and would receive old acquaintances' greetings effusively, and pass the old phrases and by-words with a strange sense of stolen sweets; while yet a third Betsy Montmorenci—a finer spirit this, and worthier of the name—would cry to a Betsy Jacobs:

'Is that you, Betsy? How *are* you? How *are* you? I'm so glad to see you. Won't you come and treat me to a cup of chocolate at

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Bonn's, just to show you haven't forgot *Olov Hasholom* times ?'

And then, having thus thrown the responsibility of stand-offishness on the poorer Betsy, the Montmorenci would launch into recollections of those good old 'Peace be upon him !' times till the grub forgot the splendours of the butterfly in a joyous resurrection of ancient scandals. But few of the Montmorencis, whatever their species, left the Ghetto without pressing bits of gold into half-reluctant palms in shabby back rooms where old friends or poor relatives mouldered.

Overhead the stars burned silently, but no one looked up at them. Under foot lay the thick black veil of mud which the Lane never lifted, but none looked down on it. It was impossible to think of aught but humanity in the bustle and confusion, in the cram and crush, in the wedge and the jam, in the squeezing and shouting, in the hubbub and medley—such a jolly, rampant, screaming, fighting, maddening, jostling polyglot, quarrelling, laughing broth of a Vanity Fair! Mendicants, vendors, buyers, gossips, showmen, all swelled the roar.

'Here's your cakes! all *Yontovdik* (for the festival)! *Yontovdik*——'

'Braces, best braces; all——'

'*Yontovdik*, only one shilling——'

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'It's the Rav's orders, mum; all legs of mutton must be porged, or my license——'

'Cowcumbers! cowcumbers!'

'Now's your chance!'

'The best trousers, gentlemen. Corst me as sure as I stand——'

'On your own head, you old——'

'*Arbah Kanfus* (four-corners)! *Arbah*——'

'My old man's been under an operation——'

'Hokey-pokey! *Yontovdik!* Hokey——'

'Get out of the way, can't you!'

'By your life and mine, Betsy——'

'Gord blesh you, mishter! a toisand yer shall ye live!'

'Eat the best *Motsos!* Only fourpence——'

'The bones must go with, marm. I've cut it as lean as possible.'

'*Charoises!* (a sweet mixture), *Charoises! Moroire!* (bitter herb), *Chraine!* (horse-radish), *Pesachdik!* (for Passover).'

'Come and have a glass of old Tom along o' me, sonny!'

'Fine plaice! Here y'are! Hi! where's yer pluck? S'elp me——'

'Bob! *Yontovdik! Yontovdik!* only a bob!'

'Chuck steak and half a pound of fat!'

'A slap in the eye if you——'

'Gord bless you! Remember me to Jacob.'

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'*Shaink* (spare) meer a 'apenny, missis *lieben*, missis *croin* (dear)——'

'An unnatural death on you, you——'

'Lord, Sal, how you've altered!'

'Ladies, here you are!'

'I give you my word, sir, the fish will be home before you.'

'Painted in the best style for a tanner!'

'A spoonge, mister?'

'I'll cut a slice of this melon for you for——'

'She's dead, poor thing! peace be upon him!'

'*Yontovdik!* Three bob for one purse containing——'

'The real live tattooed Hindian, born in the Hafrican Harchipellygo! Walk up!'

'This way for the dwarf that will speak, dance, and sing!'

'Tree lemons a penny! Tree lemons——'

'A *Shtibbur* (penny) for a poor blind man!'

'*Yontovdik! Yontovdik! Yontovdik! Yontovdik!*'

And in this last roar, common to so many of the mongers, the whole Babel would often blend for a moment and be swallowed up, re-emerging anon in its broken multiplicity.

Everybody Esther knew was in the crowd; she met them all sooner or later. In Wentworth Street, amid dead cabbage-leaves and mud and refuse and orts and offal, stood the woe-

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begone Meckish, offering his puny sponges and wooing the charitable with grinning grimaces, tempered by epileptic fits at judicious intervals. A few inches off, his wife in costly sealskin jacket purchased salmon with a Maida Vale manner. Compressed in a corner was Shosshi Shmendrik, his coat-tails yellow with the yolks of dissolving eggs from a bag in his pocket. He asked her frantically if she had seen a boy whom he had hired to carry home his cod-fish and his fowls, and explained that his missus was busy in the shop, and had delegated to him the domestic duties. It is probable that if Mrs. Shmendrik, formerly the Widow Finkelstein, ever received these dainties, she found her good man had purchased fish artificially inflated with air and fowls fattened with brown paper. Hearty Sam Abrahams, the bass chorister, whose genial countenance spread sunshine for yards around, stopped her and gave her a penny. Further on she met her teacher, Miss Miriam Hyams, and curtseyed to her, for Esther was not of those who jeeringly called 'teacher' and 'master,' according to sex, after her superiors till the victims longed for Elisha's influence over bears. Later on she was shocked to see her teacher's brother piloting bonny Bessie Sugarman through the thick of the ferment. Crushed between two barrows

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she found Mrs. Belcovitch and Fanny, who were shopping together, attended by Pesach Weingott, all carrying piles of purchases.

'Esther, if you should see my Becky in the crowd, tell her where I am,' said Mrs. Belcovitch. 'She is with one of her chosen young men. I am so feeble I can hardly crawl around, and my Becky ought to carry home the cabbages. She has well-matched legs, not one a thick one and one a thin one.'

Around the fishmongers the press was great. The fish trade was almost monopolized by English Jews, blonde, healthy-looking fellows with brawny bare arms, who were approached with dread by all but the bravest foreign Jewesses; their scale of prices and politeness varied with the status of the buyer. Esther, who had an observant eye and ear for such things, often found amusement standing unobtrusively by. To-night there was the usual comedy awaiting her enjoyment. A well-dressed dame came up to 'Uncle Abe's' stall, where half a dozen lots of fishy miscellanea were spread out.

'Good-evening, madam. Cold night, but fine. That lot? Well, you're an old customer, and fish are cheap to-day, so I can let you have 'em for a sovereign. Eighteen? Well, it's hard, but—boy! take the lady's fish. Thank you. Good-evening.'

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'How much that?' said a neatly-dressed woman, pointing to a precisely similar lot.

'Can't take less than nine bob. Fish are dear to-day. You won't get anything cheaper in the Lane; by G— you won't! Five shillings! By my life and by my children's life, they cost me more than that. So sure as I stand here, I paid—well, come, gi's seven and six and they're yours. You can't afford more than five? Well, 'old up your apron, old gal. I'll make it up out of the rich. By your life and mine, you've got a *Metsiah* (bargain) there.'

Here old Mrs. Shmendrik, Shosshi's mother, came up, a rich Paisley shawl over her head in lieu of a bonnet. Lane women who went out without bonnets were on the same plane as Lane men who went out without collars.

One of the terrors of the English fishmongers was that they required the customer to speak English, thus fulfilling an important educative function in the community. They allowed a certain percentage of jargon-words, for they themselves took licenses in this direction, but they professed not to understand pure Yiddish.

'Abraham, 'ow mosh for dees lot?' said old Mrs. Shmendrik, turning over a third similar heap and feeling the fish all over.

'Paws off!' said Abraham roughly. 'Look here! I know the tricks of you Polakinties.

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I'll name you the lowest price, and won't stand a farthing's bating. I'll lose by you, but you ain't going to worry me. Eight bob! There!'

'Avroomkely (dear little Abraham), take lebbenpence!'

'Elevenpence! By G—!' cried Uncle Abe, desperately tearing his hair. 'I knew it!' And, seizing a huge plaice by the tail, he whirled it round and struck Mrs. Shmendrik full in the face, shouting, 'Take that, you old witch! Sling your hook or I'll murder you!'

'Thou dog!' shrieked Mrs. Shmendrik, falling back on the more copious resources of her native idiom. 'A black year on thee! Mayest thou swell and die! May the hand that struck me rot away! Mayest thou be burnt alive! Thy father was a *Gonof*, and thou art a *Gonof*, and thy whole family are *Gonovim*. May Pharaoh's ten plagues——'

There was little malice at the back of it all, the mere imaginative exuberance of a race whose early poetry consisted in saying things twice over.

Uncle Abraham menacingly caught up the plaice, crying:

'May I be struck dead on the spot, if you ain't gone in one second I won't answer for the consequences! Now, then, clear off!'

'Come, Avroomkely' said Mrs. Shmendrik,

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dropping suddenly from invective to insinuativeness. 'Take fourteen pence. Hear, my son? Fourteen *Shtibbur*'s a lot of *Gelt*.'

'Are you a-going?' cried Abraham in a terrible rage. 'Ten bob's my price now.'

'Avroomkely, *noo zoog* (say now) — fourteen pence 'apenny! I am a poor vooman. Here, fifteen pence!'

Abraham seized her by the shoulders and pushed her towards the wall, where she cursed picturesquely. Esther thought it was a bad time to attempt to get her own shilling's-worth. She fought her way towards another fishmonger.

There was a kindly weather-beaten old fellow with whom Esther had often chaffered job lots when fortune smiled on the Ansells. Him, to her joy, Esther perceived. She saw a stack of gurnards on his improvised slab, and in imagination smelt herself frying them. Then a great shock as of a sudden icy douche traversed her frame, her heart seemed to stand still. For when she put her hand to her pocket to get her purse, she found but a thimble and a slate-pencil and a cotton handkerchief. It was some minutes before she could or would realize the truth that the four and sevenpence halfpenny on which so much depended was gone! Groceries and

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unleavened cakes charity had given, raisin wine had been preparing for days, but fish and meat and all the minor accessories of a well-ordered Passover table—these were the prey of the pickpocket. A blank sense of desolation overcame the child, infinitely more horrible than that which she felt when she spilt the soup; the gurnards she could have touched with her finger seemed far-off, inaccessible: in a moment more they and all things were blotted out by a hot rush of tears, and she was jostled as in a dream hither and thither by the double stream of crowd. Nothing since the death of Benjamin had given her so poignant a sense of the hollowness and uncertainty of existence. What would her father say, whose triumphant conviction that Providence had provided for his Passover was to be so rudely dispelled at the eleventh hour? Poor Moses! He had been so proud of having earned enough money to make a good *Yomtov*, and was more convinced than ever that, given a little capital to start with, he could build up a colossal business. And now she would have to go home and 'spoil everybody's *Yomtov*,' and see the sour faces of her little ones round a barren *Seder* table. Oh, it was terrible, and the child wept piteously, unheeded in the block, unheard amid the Babel!

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEAD MONKEY.

An old *Maaseh* the grandmother had told her came back to her fevered brain:

In a town in Russia lived an old Jew, who earned scarce enough to eat, and half of what he did earn was stolen from him in bribes to the officials to let him be. Persecuted and spat upon, he yet trusted in his God, and praised His name. And it came on towards Passover, and the winter was severe, and the Jew was nigh starving, and his wife had made no preparations for the Festival. And in the bitterness of her soul she derided her husband's faith, and made mock of him; but he said, 'Have patience, my wife! Our *Seder* board shall be spread as in the days of yore and as in former years.' But the Festival drew nearer and nearer, and there was nothing in the house. And the wife taunted her husband yet further, saying, 'Dost thou

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think that Elijah the prophet will call upon thee, or that the Messiah will come?' But he answered, 'Elijah the prophet walketh the earth, never having died; who knows but that he will cast an eye my way?' Whereat his wife laughed outright. And the day wore on to within a few hours of Passover, and the larder was still empty of provender, and the old Jew still full of faith. Now, it befell that the governor of the city, a hard and cruel man, sat counting out piles of gold into packets for the payment of the salaries of the officials, and at his side sat his pet monkey; and as he heaped up the pieces, so his monkey imitated him, making little packets of its own, to the amusement of the governor. And when the governor could not pick up a piece easily he moistened his forefinger, putting it to his mouth, whereupon the monkey followed suit each time; only, deeming its master was devouring the gold, it swallowed a coin every time he put his finger to his lips. So that of a sudden it was taken ill and died. And one of his men said, 'Lo, the creature is dead. What shall we do with it?' And the governor was sorely vexed in spirit, because he could not make his accounts straight, and he answered gruffly: 'Trouble me not! Throw it into the house of the old Jew down the street.' So the man took the carcase and threw it with

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thunderous violence into the passage of the Jew's house, and ran off as hard as he could. And the good wife came bustling out in alarm, and saw a carcase hanging over an iron bucket that stood in the passage. And she knew that it was the act of a Christian, and she took up the carrion to bury it, when, lo! a rain of gold pieces came from the stomach, ripped up by the sharp rim of the vessel. And she called to her husband: 'Hasten! See what Elijah the prophet hath sent us.' And she scurried into the market-place and bought wine and unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and all things necessary for the *Seder* table, and a little fish therewith, which might be hastily cooked before the Festival came in; and the old couple were happy and gave the monkey honourable burial, and sang blithely of the deliverance at the Red Sea, and filled Elijah's goblet to the brim till the wine ran over upon the white cloth.

Esther gave a scornful little sniff as the thought of this happy *dénouement* flashed upon her. No miracle like that would happen to her or hers; nobody was likely to leave a dead monkey on the stairs of the garret—hardly even the 'stuffed monkey' of contemporary confectionery. And then her queer little brain forgot its grief in sudden speculations as to what she

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would think if her four and sevenpence halfpenny came back. She had never yet doubted the existence of the Unseen Power; only its working seemed so incomprehensibly indifferent to human joys and sorrows. Would she believe that her father was right in holding that a special Providence watched over him? The spirit of her brother Solomon came upon her, and she felt that she would. Speculation had checked her sobs; she dried her tears in stony scepticism, and, looking up, saw Malka's gipsy-like face bending over her, breathing peppermint.

'What weepest thou, Esther?' she said, not unkindly. 'I did not know thou wast a gusher with the eyes.'

'I've lost my purse,' sobbed Esther, softened afresh by the sight of a friendly face.

'Ah, thou *Schlemihl!* Thou art like thy father. How much was in it?'

'Four and sevenpence halfpenny!' sobbed Esther.

'Tu, tu, tu, tu, tu!' ejaculated Malka in horror. 'Thou art the ruin of thy father!' Then, turning to the fishmonger, with whom she had just completed a purchase, she counted out thirty-five shillings into his hand. 'Here, Esther,' she said, 'thou shalt carry my fish, and I will give thee a shilling.'

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A small slimy boy who stood expectant by scowled at Esther as she painfully lifted the heavy basket and followed in the wake of her relative, whose heart was swelling with self-approbation.

Fortunately, Zachariah Square was near, and Esther soon received her shilling, with a proportionate sense of Providence. The fish was deposited at Milly's house, which was brightly illuminated, and seemed to poor Esther a magnificent palace of light and luxury. Malka's own house, diagonally across the Square, was dark and gloomy. The two families being at peace, Milly's house was the headquarters of the clan and the clothes-brush. Everybody was home, for *Yomtov*. Malka's husband, Michael, and Milly's husband, Ephraim, were sitting at the table smoking big cigars, and playing loo with Sam Levine and David Brandon, who had been seduced into making a fourth. The two young husbands had but that day returned from the country; for you cannot get unleavened bread at commercial hotels, and David, in spite of a stormy crossing, had arrived from Germany an hour earlier than he had expected, and, not knowing what to do with himself, had been surveying the humours of the Festival Fair, till Sam met him and dragged him round to Zachariah Square. It was too

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late to call that night on Hannah, to be introduced to her parents, especially as he had wired he would come the next day. There was no chance of Hannah being at the Club; it was too busy a night for all angels of the hearth; even to-morrow, the eve of the Festival, would be an awkward time for a young man to thrust his love-affairs upon a household given over to the more important matters of dietary preparation. Still, David could not consent to live another whole day without seeing the light of his eyes.

Leah, inwardly projecting an orgie of comic operas and dances, was assisting Milly in the kitchen. Both young women were covered with flour and oil and grease, and their coarse handsome faces were flushed, for they had been busy all day drawing fowls, stewing prunes and pippins, gutting fish, melting fat, changing the crockery, and doing the thousand and one things necessitated by gratitude for the discomfiture of Pharaoh at the Red Sea.

Ezekiel slumbered upstairs in his crib.

'Mother,' said Michael, pulling pensively at his whisker as he looked at his card, 'this is Mr. Brandon—a friend of Sam's. Don't get up, Brandon; we don't make ceremonies here. Turn up yours—ah, the nine of trumps!'

'Lucky men!' said Malka, with Festival

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flippancy. 'While I must hurry off my supper, so as to buy the fish, and Milly and Leah must sweat in the kitchen, you can squat yourselves down and play cards.'

'Yes,' laughed Sam, looking up, and adding in Hebrew: '"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hath not made me a woman."'

'Now, now,' said David, putting his hand jocosely across the young man's mouth. 'No more Hebrew. Remember what happened last time. Perhaps there's some mysterious significance even in that, and you'll find yourself let in for something before you know where you are.'

'You're not going to prevent me talking the language of my fathers,' gurgled Sam, bursting into a merry operatic whistle when the pressure was removed.

'Milly! Leah!' cried Malka. 'Come and look at my fish! Such a *Metsiah* (bargain)! See, they're alive yet!'

'They *are* beauties, mother!' said Leah, entering with her sleeves half tucked up, showing the finely-moulded white arms in curious juxtaposition with the coarse red hands.

'Oh, mother, they're alive!' said Milly, peering over her sister's shoulder.

Both knew by bitter experience that their

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mother considered herself a connoisseur in the purchase of fish.

'And how much do you think I gave for them?' went on Malka triumphantly.

'Two pounds ten,' said Milly.

Malka's eyes twinkled, and she shook her head.

'Two pounds fifteen,' said Leah, with the air of hitting it now.

Still Malka shook her head.

'Here, Michael, what do you think I gave for all this lot?'

'Diamonds!' said Michael.

'Be not a fool, Michael!' said Malka sternly. 'Look here a minute.'

'Eh? Oh!' said Michael, looking up from his cards. 'Don't bother, mother. My game!'

'Michael,' thundered Malka, 'will you look at this fish? How much do you think I gave for this splendid lot? Here, look at 'em, alive yet!'

'H'm—ha!' said Michael, taking his complex corkscrew combination out of his pocket and putting it back again. 'Three guineas?'

'Three guineas!' laughed Malka in good-humoured scorn. 'Lucky I don't let *you* do my marketing!'

'Yes, he'd be a nice fishy customer!' said Sam Levine with a guffaw.

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'Ephraim, what think you I got this fish for? Cheap now, you know.'

'I don't know, mother,' replied the twinkling-eyed Pole obediently. 'Three pounds, perhaps, if you got it cheap.'

Samuel and David, duly appealed to, reduced the amount to two pounds five and two pounds respectively. Then, having got everybody's attention fixed upon her, she exclaimed:

'Thirty shillings!'

She could not resist nibbling off the five shillings. Everybody drew a long breath.

'Tu, tu!' they ejaculated in chorus. 'What a *Metsiah!*'

'Sam,' said Ephraim immediately afterwards, '*you* turned up the ace.'

Milly and Leah went back into the kitchen.

It was rather too quick a relapse into the common things of life, and made Malka suspect the admiration was but superficial. She turned with a spice of ill-humour, and saw Esther still standing timidly behind her. Her face flushed, for she knew the child had overheard her in a lie.

'What art thou waiting about for?' she said roughly in Yiddish. '*Na!* there's a peppermint.'

'I thought you might want me for something else,' said Esther, blushing, but accepting the peppermint for Ikey. 'And I—I——'

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'Well, speak up; I won't bite thee.' Malka continued to talk in Yiddish, though the child answered her in English.

'I—I—nothing,' said Esther, turning away.

'Here, turn thy face round, child,' said Malka, putting her hand on the girl's forcibly-averted head. 'Be not so sullen; thy mother was like that: she'd want to bite my head off if I hinted thy father was not the man for her, and then she'd *schmull* and sulk for a week after. Thank God, we have no one like that in this house. I couldn't live for a day with people with such nasty tempers. Her temper worried her into the grave, though, if thy father had not brought his mother over from Poland, my poor cousin might have carried home my fish to-night instead of thee. Poor Gittel—peace be upon him! Come, tell me what ails thee, or thy dead mother will be cross with thee.'

Esther turned her head, and murmured: 'I thought you might lend me the three and sevenpence halfpenny!'

'Lend thee!' exclaimed Malka. 'Why, how canst thou ever repay it?'

'Oh yes,' affirmed Esther earnestly. 'I have lots of money in the bank.'

'Eh! what? In the bank?' gasped Malka.

'Yes, I won five pounds in school, and I'll pay you out of that.'

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'Thy father never told me that!' said Malka. 'He kept that dark. Ah, he is a regular *Schnorrer!*'

'My father hasn't seen you since,' retorted Esther hotly. 'If you had come round when he was sitting *Shivah* for Benjamin—peace be upon him!—you would have known.'

Malka got as red as fire. Moses had sent Solomon round to inform the *Mishpochah* of his affliction, but at a period when the most casual acquaintance thinks it his duty to call (armed with hard-boiled eggs, a pound of sugar, or an ounce of tea) on the mourners condemned to sit on the floor for a week, no representative of the 'Family' had made an appearance. Moses took it meekly enough, but his mother insisted that such a slight from Zachariah Square would never have been received if he had married another woman, and Esther for once agreed with her grandmother's sentiments, if not with her Hibernian expression of them.

But that the child should now dare to twit the head of the Family with bad behaviour was intolerable to Malka, the more so as she had no defence.

'Thou impudent of face!' she cried sharply. 'Dost thou forget whom thou talkest to?'

'No,' retorted Esther. 'You are my father's

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cousin ; that is why you ought to have come to see him.'

'I am not thy father's cousin, God forbid!' cried Malka. 'I was thy mother's cousin—God have mercy on her!—and I wonder not you drove her into the grave between the lot of you. I am no relative of any of you, thank God! and from this day forwards I wash my hands of the lot of you, you ungrateful pack! Let thy father send you all into the streets with matches ; not another thing will I do for you.'

'Ungrateful!' said Esther hotly. 'Why, what have you ever done for us? When my poor mother was alive, you made her scrub your floors and clean your windows, as if she was an Irishwoman.'

'Impudent of face!' cried Malka, almost choking with rage. 'What have I done for you? Why—why—I—I, shameless hussy! And this is what Judaism's coming to in England! This is the manners and religion they teach thee at thy school, eh? What have I—— Impudent of face! At this very moment thou holdest one of my shillings in thy hand!'

'Take it!' said Esther, and threw the coin passionately to the floor, where it rolled about pleasantly for a terrible minute of human

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silence. The smoke-wreathed card-players looked up at last.

'Eh? Eh? What's this, my little girl?' said Michael genially. 'What makes you so naughty?'

A hysterical fit of sobbing was the only reply. In the bitterness of that moment Esther hated the whole world.

'Don't cry like that! Don't!' said David Brandon kindly.

Esther, her little shoulders heaving convulsively, put her hand on the latch.

'What's the matter with the girl, mother?' said Michael.

'She's *meshuggah*,' said Malka — 'raving mad!' Her face was white, and she spoke as if in self-defence. 'She's such a *Schlemihl* that she lost her purse in the Lane, and I found her gushing with the eyes, and I let her carry home my fish, and gave her a shilling and a peppermint, and thou seest how she turns on me—thou seest?'

'Poor little thing!' said David impulsively. 'Here, come here, my child!'

Esther refused to budge.

'Come here,' he repeated gently. 'See, I will make up the loss to you! Take the pool; I've just won it, so I shan't miss it.'

Esther sobbed louder, but she did not move.

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David rose, emptied the heap of silver into his palm, walked over to Esther and pushed it into her pocket. Michael got up and added half a crown to it, and the other two men followed suit. Then David opened the door, put her outside gently, and said :

'There! run away, my little dear, and be more careful of pickpockets.'

All this while Malka had stood frozen to the stony dignity of a dingy terra-cotta statue. But ere the door could close again on the child, she darted forward and seized her by the collar of her frock.

'Give me that money,' she cried.

Half hypnotized by the irate swarthy face, Esther made no resistance while Malka rifled her pocket, less dexterously than the first operator. Malka counted out the coins.

'Seventeen and sixpence,' she announced in terrible tones. 'How darest thou take all this money from strangers, and perfect strangers! Do my children think to shame me before my own relative?' And throwing the money violently into the plate, she took out a gold coin and pressed it into the bewildered child's hand. 'There,' she shouted, 'hold that tight! It is a sovereign; and if ever I catch thee taking money from anyone in this house but thy mother's own cousin, I'll wash my hands of

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thee for ever. Go now, go on; I can't afford any more, so it's useless waiting. Good-night; and tell thy father I wish him a happy *Yontov*, and I hope he'll lose no more children.'

She hustled the child into the Square and banged the door upon her, and Esther went about her mammoth marketing half dazed, with an undercurrent of happiness, vaguely apologetic towards her father and his Providence.

Malka stooped down, picked up the clothes-brush from under the side-table, and strode silently and diagonally across the Square.

There was a moment's dread silence; the thunderbolt had fallen; the Festival felicity of two households trembled in the balance. Michael muttered impatiently, and went out on his wife's track.

'He's an awful fool,' said Ephraim; 'I should make her pay for her tantrums.'

The card-party broke up in confusion. David Brandon took his leave, and strolled about aimlessly under the stars, his soul blissful with the sense of a good deed that had only superficially miscarried. His feet took him to Hannah's house. All the windows were lit up. His heart began to ache at the thought that his bright, radiant girl was beyond that door-step he had never crossed. He pictured the

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love-light in her eyes, for surely she was dreaming of him as he of her. He took out his watch; the time was twenty to nine. After all, would it be so outrageous to call? He went away twice. The third time, defying the *convenances*, he knocked at the door, his heart beating almost as loudly.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SHADOW OF RELIGION.

THE little servant-girl who opened the door for him looked relieved at the sight of him, for it might have been the Rebbitzin returning from the Lane with heaps of supplies and an accumulation of ill-humour. She showed him into the study, and in a few moments Hannah hurried in with a big apron and a general flavour of the kitchen.

'How dare you come to-night!' she began, but the sentence died on his lips.

'How hot your face is!' he said, dinting the flesh fondly with his finger. 'I see my little girl is glad to have me back.'

'It's not that; it's the fire. I'm frying fish for *Yomtov*,' she said with a happy laugh.

'And yet you say you're not a good Jewess,' he laughed back.

'You had no right to come and catch me like

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this,' she pouted, 'all greasy and dishevelled. I'm not made up to receive visitors.'

'Call me a visitor?' he grumbled. 'Judging by your appearance, I should say you were always made up. Why, you're perfectly radiant.'

Then the talk became less intelligible. The first symptom of returning rationality was her inquiry:

'What sort of a journey did you have back?'

'The sea was rough, but I'm a good sailor.'

'And the poor fellow's father and mother?'

'I wrote you about them.'

'So you did, but only just a line.'

'Oh, don't let us talk about the subject just now, dear; it's too painful. Come, let me kiss that little woe-begone look out of your eyes. There! now another: that was only for the right eye, this is for the left. But where's your mother?'

'Oh, you innocent!' she replied; 'as if you hadn't watched her go out of the house!'

''Pon my honour not,' he said, smiling. 'Why should I now? Am I not the accepted son-in-law of the house, you silly, timid little thing! What a happy thought it was of yours to let the cat out of the bag! Come, let me give you another kiss for it! Oh, I really

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must! You deserve it, and whatever it costs me you shall be rewarded. There! Now then, where's the old man? I have to receive his blessing, I know, and I want to get it over.'

'It's worth having, I can tell you, so speak more respectfully,' said Hannah, more than half in earnest.

'*You* are the best blessing he can give me, and that's worth—well, I wouldn't venture to price it.'

'It's not your line, eh?'

'I don't know; I have done a good deal in gems; but where *is* the Rabbi?'

'Up in the bedrooms gathering the *Chomutz*. You know he won't trust anybody else. He creeps under all the beds, hunting with a candle for stray crumbs, and looks in all the wardrobes and the pockets of all my dresses. Luckily I don't keep your letters there. I hope he won't set something alight; he did once. And one year—oh, it was so funny!—after he had ransacked every hole and corner of the house, imagine his horror in the middle of Passover to find a crumb of bread audaciously planted—where do you suppose? In his Passover Prayer-Book. But, oh!'—with a little scream—'you naughty boy! I quite forgot.' She took him by the shoulders and peered along his coat.

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'Have you brought any crumbs with you? This room's *Pesachdik* already.'

He looked dubious.

She pushed him towards the door. 'Go out and give yourself a good shaking on the door-step, or else we shall have to clean out the room all over again.'

'Don't!' he protested. 'I might shake out that.'

'What?'

'The ring.'

She uttered a little pleased sigh.

'Oh, have you brought that?'

'Yes, I got it while I was away. You know, I believe the reason you sent me trooping to the Continent in such haste was you wanted to ensure your engagement ring being "made in Germany." It's had a stormy passage to England, has that ring. I suppose the advantage of buying rings in Germany is that you're certain not to get Paris diamonds in them—they are so intensely patriotic, the Germans. That was your idea wasn't it, Hannah?'

'Oh, show it me! Don't talk so much,' she said, smiling.

'No,' he said teasingly; 'no more accidents for me! I'll wait, to make sure, till your father and mother have taken me to their arms. Rabbinical law is so full of pitfalls; I might

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touch your finger this or that way, and then we should be married. And then if your parents said "No" after all——'

'We should have to make the best of a bad job,' she finished up laughingly.

'All very well,' he went on in his fun; 'but it would be a pretty kettle of fish.'

'Heavens!' she cried, 'so it will be; they will be charred to ashes.' And, turning tail, she fled to the kitchen, pursued by her lover. There, dead to the surprise of the servant, David Brandon fed his eyes on the fair incarnation of Jewish domesticity, type of the vestal virgins of Israel, ministresses at the hearth. It was a very homely kitchen, the dressers glittering with speckless utensils, and the deep-red glow of the coal, over which the pieces of fish spluttered and crackled in their bath of oil, filling the room with a sense of deep peace and cosy comfort. David's imagination transferred the kitchen to his future home, and he was almost dazzled by the thought of actually inhabiting such a fairyland alone with Hannah. He had knocked about a great deal, not always innocently, but deep down in his heart was the instinct of well-ordered life. His past seemed joyless folly and chill emptiness.. He felt his eyes growing humid as he looked at the frank-souled girl who had given herself to him. He

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was not humble; but for a moment he found himself wondering how he deserved the trust, and there was reverence in the touch with which he caressed her hair. In another moment the frying was complete, and the contents of the pan were neatly added to the dish. Then the voice of Reb Shemuel crying for Hannah came down the kitchen stairs and the lovers returned to the upper world. The Reb had a tiny harvest of crumbs in a brown paper, and wanted Hannah to stow it away safely till the morning, when, to make assurance doubly sure, a final expedition in search of leaven would be undertaken. Hannah received the packet, and in return presented her betrothed.

Reb Shemuel had not, of course, expected him till the next morning, but he welcomed him as heartily as Hannah could desire.

'The Most High bless you!' he said in his charming foreign accents. 'May you make my Hannah as good a husband as she will make you a wife!'

'Trust me, Reb Shemuel,' said David, grasping his great hand warmly.

'Hannah says you're a sinner in Israel,' said the Reb, smiling playfully, though there was a touch of anxiety in the tones. 'But I suppose you will keep a *kosher* house.'

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'Make your mind easy, sir,' said David heartily. 'We must, if it's only to have the pleasure of your dining with us sometimes.'

The old man patted him gently on the shoulder.

'Ah, you will soon become a good Jew,' he said. 'My Hannah will teach you, God bless her!' Reb Shemuel's voice was a bit husky. He bent down and kissed Hannah's forehead. 'I was a bit *link* myself before I married my Simcha,' he added encouragingly.

'No, no, not you,' said David, smiling in response to the twinkle in the Reb's eye. 'I warrant *you* never skipped a *Mitzvah* even as a bachelor.'

'Oh yes, I did,' replied the Reb, letting the twinkle develop to a broad smile, 'for when I was a bachelor I hadn't fulfilled the precept to marry, don't you see?'

'Is marriage a *Mitzvah*, then?' inquired David, amused.

'Certainly. In our holy religion everything a man ought to do is a *Mitzvah*, even if it is pleasant.'

'Oh, then even I must have laid up some good deeds,' laughed David, 'for I have always enjoyed myself. Really, it isn't such a bad religion, after all.'

'Bad religion!' echoed Reb Shemuel genially.

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'Wait till you've tried it. You've never had a proper training, that's clear. Are your parents alive?'

'No, they both died when I was a child,' said David, becoming serious.

'I thought so,' said Reb Shemuel. 'Fortunately my Hannah's didn't.' He smiled at the humour of the phrase, and Hannah took his hand and pressed it tenderly. 'Ah, it will be all right,' said the Reb with a characteristic burst of optimism. 'God is good; you have a sound Jewish heart at bottom, David, my son. Hannah get the *yomtovdik* wine. We will drink a glass for *Mazzoltov*, and I hope your mother will be back in time to join in.'

Hannah ran into the kitchen, feeling happier than she had ever been in her life. She wept a little, and laughed a little, and loitered a little to recover her composure and allow the two men to get to know each other a little.

'How is your Hannah's late husband?' inquired the Reb, with almost a wink, for everything combined to make him jolly as a sandboy. 'I understand he is a friend of yours.'

'We used to be schoolboys together, that is all. Though, strangely enough, I've just spent an hour with him. He is very well,' answered David, smiling. 'He is about to marry again.'

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'His first love, of course?' said the Reb.

'Yes; people always come back to that,' said David, laughing.

'That's right, that's right!' said the Reb. 'I am glad there was no unpleasantness.'

'Unpleasantness? No, how could there be? Leah knew it was only a joke. All's well that ends well, and we may perhaps all get married on the same day and risk another mix-up. Ha! ha! ha!'

'Is it your wish to marry soon, then?'

'Yes; there are too many long engagements among our people: they often go off.'

'Then I suppose you have the means?'

'Oh yes, I can show you my——'

The old man waved his hand.

'I don't want to see anything; my girl must be supported decently, that is all I ask. What do you do for a living?'

'I have made a little money at the Cape, and now I think of going into business.'

'What business?'

'I haven't settled.'

'You won't open on Shabbos?' said the Reb anxiously.

David hesitated a second. In some businesses Saturday is the best day; still, he felt that he was not quite radical enough to break the Sabbath deliberately, and since he had con-

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templated settling down his religion had become rather more real to him. Besides, he must sacrifice something for Hannah's sake.

'Have no fear, sir,' he said cheerfully.

Reb Shemuel gripped his hand in grateful silence.

'You mustn't think me quite a lost soul,' pursued David after a moment of emotion. 'You don't remember me, but I had lots of blessings and halfpence from you when I was a lad. I dare say I valued the latter more in those days.' He smiled to hide his emotion.

Reb Shemuel was beaming. 'Did you really?' he inquired. 'I don't remember you. But, then, I have blessed so many little children. Of course you'll come to the *Seder* to-morrow evening, and taste some of Hannah's cookery. You're one of the family now, you know.'

'I shall be delighted to have the privilege of having *Seder* with you,' replied David, his heart going out more and more to the fatherly old man.

'What *Shool* will you be going to for Passover? I can get you a seat in mine if you haven't arranged.'

'Thank you, but I promised Mr. Birnbaum to come to the little synagogue of which he is President. It seems they have a scarcity of

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Cohenim, and they want me to bless the congregation, I suppose.'

'What!' cried Reb Shemuel excitedly, 'are you a *Cohen?*'

'Of course I am. Why, they got me to bless them in the Transvaal last Atonement. So you see I'm anything but a sinner in Israel.' He laughed, but his laugh ended abruptly. Reb Shemuel's face had grown white. His hands were trembling.

'What is the matter? You are ill,' cried David.

The old man shook his head. Then he struck his brow with his fist. '*Ach Gott!*' he cried. 'Why did I not think of finding out before? But thank God I know it in time!'

'Finding out what?' said David, fearing the old man's reason was giving way.

'My daughter cannot marry you,' said Reb Shemuel in hushed, quavering tones.

'Eh? What?' said David blankly.

'It is impossible.'

'What are you talking about, Reb Shemuel?'

'You are a *Cohen.* Hannah cannot marry a *Cohen.*'

'Not marry a *Cohen?* Why, I thought they were Israel's aristocracy.'

'That is why. A *Cohen* cannot marry a divorced woman.'

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The fit of trembling passed from the old Reb to the young man. His heart pulsed as with the stroke of a mighty piston. Without comprehending, Hannah's prior misadventure gave him a horrible foreboding of critical complications.

'Do you mean to say I can't marry Hannah?' he asked almost in a whisper.

'Such is the law. A woman who has had *Gett* may not marry a *Cohen*.'

'But you surely wouldn't call Hannah a divorced woman?' he cried hoarsely.

'How shall I not? I gave her the divorce myself.'

'Great God!' exclaimed David. 'Then Sam has ruined our lives.' He stood a moment in dazed horror, striving to grasp the terrible tangle. Then he burst forth: 'This is some of your cursed Rabbinical laws; it is not Judaism, it is not true Judaism. God never made any such law.'

'Hush!' said Reb Shemuel sternly. 'It is the holy Torah. It is not even the Rabbis, of whom you speak like an Epicurean. It is in Leviticus xxi. 7: '"Neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband; for he is holy unto his God. Thou shall sanctify him, therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God; he shall be holy unto

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thee, for I the Lord which sanctify you am holy."'

For an instant David was overwhelmed by the quotation; the Bible was still a sacred book to him. Then he cried indignantly:

'But God never meant it to apply to a case like this!'

'We must obey God's law,' said Reb Shemuel.

'Then it is the devil's law!' shouted David, losing all control of himself.

The Reb's face grew dark as night. There was a moment of dread silence.

'Here you are, father,' said Hannah, returning with the wine and some glasses which she had carefully dusted. Then she paused and gave a little cry, nearly losing her hold of the tray. 'What's the matter? What has happened?' she asked anxiously.

'Take away the wine—we shall drink nobody's health to-night,' cried David brutally.

'My God!' said Hannah, all the hue of happiness dying out of her cheek. She threw down the tray on the table, and ran to her father's arms. 'What is it? oh, what is it, father?' she cried. 'You haven't had a quarrel?'

The old man was silent. The girl looked appealingly from one to the other.

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'No; it's worse than that,' said David in cold, harsh tones. 'You remember your marriage in fun to Sam?'

'Yes! Merciful heavens! I guess it! There was something not valid in the *Gett*, after all.'

Her anguish at the thought of losing him was so apparent that he softened a little.

'No, not that,' he said more gently. 'But this blessed religion of ours reckons you a divorced woman, and so you can't marry me, because I'm a *Cohen*.'

'Can't marry you because you're a *Cohen!*' repeated Hannah, dazed in her turn.

'We must obey the Torah,' said Reb Shemuel again in low, solemn tones. 'It is your friend Levine who has erred, not the Torah.'

'The Torah cannot visit a mere bit of fun so cruelly,' protested David. 'And on the innocent, too.'

'Sacred things should not be jested with,' said the old man in stern tones that yet quavered with sympathy and pity. 'On his head is the sin; on his head is the responsibility.'

'Father!' cried Hannah in piercing tones, 'can nothing be done?'

The old man shook his head sadly.

The poor pretty face was pallid, with a pain

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too deep for tears. The shock was too sudden, too terrible. She sank helplessly into a chair.

'Something must be done—something shall be done!' thundered David. 'I will appeal to the Chief Rabbi.'

'And what can he do? Can he go behind the Torah?' said Reb Shemuel pitifully.

'I won't ask him to. But if he has a grain of common-sense he will see that our case is an exception, and cannot come under the Law.'

'The Law knows no exceptions,' said Reb Shemuel gently, quoting in Hebrew: '"The Law of God is perfect, enlightening the eyes." Be patient, my dear children, in your affliction. It is the will of God. The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Bless ye the Name of the Lord!'

'Not I!' said David harshly. 'But look to Hannah! She has fainted.'

'No, I am all right,' said Hannah wearily, opening the eyes she had closed. 'Do not make so certain, father. Look at your books again. Perhaps they do make an exception in such a case.'

The Reb shook his head hopelessly.

'Do not expect that,' he said. 'Believe me, my Hannah, if there were a gleam of hope, I would not hide it from you. Be a good girl, dear, and bear your trouble like a true Jewish

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maiden. Have faith in God, my child. He doth all things for the best. Come, now, rouse yourself. Tell David you will always be a friend, and that your father will love him as though he were indeed his son.'

He moved towards her, and touched her tenderly. He felt a violent spasm traversing her bosom.

'I can't, father,' she cried in a choking voice. 'I can't. Don't ask me.'

David leaned against the manuscript-littered table in stony silence. The stern granite faces of the old Continental Rabbis seemed to frown down on him from the walls, and he returned the frown with interest. His heart was full of bitterness, contempt, revolt. What a pack of knavish bigots they must all have been! Reb Shemuel bent down and took his daughter's head in his trembling palms. The eyes were closed again; the chest heaved painfully with silent sobs.

'Do you love him so much, Hannah?' whispered the old man.

Her sobs answered, growing loud at last.

'But you love your religion more, my child?' he murmured anxiously. 'That will bring you peace.'

Her sobs gave him no assurance. Presently the contagion of sobbing took him too.

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'O God! God!' he moaned. 'What sin have I committed that Thou shouldst punish my child thus?'

'Don't blame God!' burst forth David at last. 'It's your own foolish bigotry. Is it not enough your daughter doesn't ask to marry a Christian? Be thankful, old man, for that; and put away all this antiquated superstition. We're living in the nineteenth century.'

'And what if we are!' said Reb Shemuel, blazing up in turn. 'The Torah is eternal. Thank God for your youth, and your health and strength, and do not blaspheme Him because you cannot have all the desire of your heart or the inclination of your eyes.'

'Desire of my heart!' retorted David. 'Do you imagine I am only thinking of my own suffering? Look at your daughter; think of what you are doing to her, and beware before it is too late.'

'Is it in my hand to do or to forbear?' asked the old man. 'It is the Torah. Am I responsible for that?'

'Yes,' said David, out of mere revolt. Then, seeking to justify himself, his face lit up with sudden inspiration. 'Who need ever know? The Maggid is dead. Old Hyams has gone to America. So Hannah has told me. It's a thousand to one Leah's people never heard of

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the law in Leviticus. If they had, it's another thousand to one against their putting two and two together. It requires a Talmudist like you to even dream of reckoning Hannah as an ordinary divorced woman. If they did, it's a third thousand to one against their telling anybody. Then, again, fortunately you were the man to divorce her. Let her be married by some other minister—by the Chief Rabbi himself; and, to make assurance doubly sure, I'll not mention that I'm a *Cohen*.'

The words poured forth like a torrent, overwhelming the Reb for a moment. Hannah leapt up with a hysterical cry of joy:

'Yes, yes, father; it will be all right, after all. Nobody knows. Oh, thank God! thank God!'

There was a moment of tense silence. Then the old man's voice rose slowly and painfully.

'Thank God!' he repeated. 'Do you dare mention the Name, even when you propose to profane it? Do you ask me—your father, Reb Shemuel—to consent to such a Profanation of the Name?'

'And why not?' said David angrily. 'Whom else has a daughter the right to ask mercy from, if not her father?'

'God have mercy on me!' groaned the old Reb, covering his face with his hands.

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'Come, come!' said David impatiently. 'Be sensible. It's nothing unworthy of you at all. Hannah was never really married, so cannot be really divorced. We only ask you to obey the spirit of the Torah, instead of the letter.'

The old man shook his head, unwavering. His cheeks were white and wet, but his expression was stern and solemn.

'Just think!' went on David passionately. 'What am I better than another Jew—than yourself, for instance—that I shouldn't marry a divorced woman?'

'It is the Law. You are a *Cohen*—a priest.'

'A priest—ha! ha! ha!' laughed David bitterly. 'A priest—in the nineteenth century! When the Temple has been destroyed these two thousand years!'

'It will be rebuilt, please God,' said Reb Shemuel. 'We must be ready for it.'

'Oh yes, I'll be ready; ha! ha! ha! A priest! Holy unto the Lord! I a priest? ha! ha! ha! Do you know what my holiness consists in? In eating *tripha* meat, and going to *Shool* a few times a year. And I, *I* am too holy to marry *your* daughter! Oh, it is rich!'

He ended in uncontrollable mirth, slapping his knee in ghastly enjoyment. His laughter rang terrible. Reb Shemuel trembled from head to foot. Hannah's cheek was drawn and

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white. She seemed overwrought beyond endurance. There followed a silence only less terrible than David's laughter.

'A *Cohen!*' burst forth David again; 'a holy *Cohen* up to date! Do you know what the boys say about us priests when we're blessing you common people? They say that if you look on us once during that sacred function you'll get blind, and if you look on us a second time you'll die. A nice reverent joke that, eh? Ha! ha! ha! you're blind already, Reb Shemuel. Beware you don't look at me again, or I'll commence to bless you. Ha! ha! ha! ha!' Again the terrible silence. 'Ah well,' David resumed, his bitterness welling forth in irony. 'And so the first sacrifice the priest is called upon to make is that of your daughter. But I won't, Reb Shemuel, mark my words; I won't, not till she offers her own throat to the knife. If she and I are parted, on you and you alone the guilt must rest. *You* will have to perform the sacrifice.'

'What God wishes me to do I will do,' said the old man in a broken voice. 'What is it to that which our ancestors suffered for the glory of the Name?'

'Yes; but it seems you suffer by proxy,' retorted David savagely.

'My God! Do you think I would not die

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to make Hannah happy?' faltered the old man. 'But God has laid the burden on her, and I can only help her to bear it. And now, sir, I must beg you to go; you do but distress my child.'

'What say you, Hannah? Do you wish me to go?'

'Yes. What is the use—now?' breathed Hannah through white, quivering lips.

'My child!' said the old man pitifully.

He strained her to his breast.

'All right,' said David in strange harsh tones, scarcely recognisable as his. 'I see you are your father's daughter.' He took his hat and turned his back upon the tragic embrace.

'David!' She called his name in an agonized, hoarse voice; she held her arms towards him. He did not turn round. 'David!' Her voice rose to a shriek. 'You will not leave me?'

He faced her exultant.

'Ah, you will come with me? You will be my wife?'

'No—no—not now, not now. I cannot answer you now. Let me think. Good-bye, dearest, good-bye!'

She burst out weeping. David took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. Then he went out hurriedly.

Hannah wept on, her father holding her hand in piteous silence.

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'Oh, it is cruel—your religion!' she sobbed; 'cruel, cruel!'

'Hannah! Shemuel! where are you?' suddenly came the excited voice of Simcha from the passage. 'Come and look at the lovely fowls I've bought—and such *Metsiahs*. They're worth double. Oh, what a beautiful *Yomtov* we shall have!'

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CHAPTER XXV.

SEDER NIGHT.

Prosaic miles of street stretch all around,
Astir with restless, hurried life, and spanned
By arches that with thund'rous trains resound,
And throbbing wires that galvanize the land;
Gin palaces in tawdry splendour stand;
The newsboys shriek of mangled bodies found;
The last burlesque is playing in the Strand—
In modern prose, all poetry seems drowned.
Yet in ten thousand homes this April night
An ancient people celebrates its birth
To Freedom, with a reverential mirth,
With customs quaint and many a hoary rite,
Waiting until, its tarnished glories bright,
Its God shall be the God of all the Earth.

To an imaginative child like Esther, Seder Night was a charmed time. The strange symbolic dishes—the bitter herbs and the sweet mixture of apples, almonds, spices and wine; the roasted bone and the lamb; the salt water and the four cups of raisin wine; the great round unleavened cakes, with their mottled surfaces, some thin, some specially thick and sacred; the special Hebrew melodies and verses, with their jingle of

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rhymes and assonances; the quaint ceremonial, with its striking moments, as when the finger was dipped in the wine and the drops sprinkled over the shoulder in repudiation of the ten plagues of Egypt cabalistically magnified to two hundred and fifty—all this penetrated deep into her consciousness and made the recurrence of every Passover coincide with a rush of pleasant anticipations and a sense of the special privilege of being born a happy Jewish child. Vaguely, indeed, did she co-ordinate the celebration with the history enshrined in it or with the prospective history of her race. It was like a tale out of the fairy-books, this miraculous deliverance of her forefathers in the dim haze of antiquity—true enough, but not more definitely realized on that account. And yet, not easily dissoluble links were being forged with her race, which has anticipated Positivism in vitalizing history by making it religion.

The *Motsos* that Esther ate were not dainty—they were coarse, of the quality called 'seconds,' for even the unleavened bread of charity is not necessarily delicate eating—but few things melted sweeter on the palate than a segment of a *Motso* dipped in cheap raisin wine; the unconventionality of the food made life less common, more picturesque. Simple Ghetto children, into whose existence the ceaseless

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round of fast and feast, of prohibited and enjoined pleasures, of varying species of food, brought change and relief! Imprisoned in the area of a few narrow streets, unlovely and sombre, muddy and ill-smelling, immured in dreary houses and surrounded with mean and depressing sights and sounds, the spirit of childhood took radiance and colour from its own inner light, and the alchemy of youth could still transmute its lead to gold. No little princess in the courts of fairyland could feel a fresher interest and pleasure in life than Esther sitting at the *Seder* table, where her father—no longer a slave in Egypt—leaned royally upon two chairs, supplied with pillows as the *Din* prescribes. Not even the monarch's prime minister could have had a meaner opinion of Pharaoh than Moses Ansell in this symbolically sybaritic attitude. A live dog is better than a dead lion, as a great teacher in Israel had said. How much better, then, a live lion than a dead dog? Pharaoh, for all his purple and fine linen and his treasure cities, was at the bottom of the Red Sea, smitten with two hundred and fifty plagues, and even if, as tradition asserted, he had been made to live on and on to be King of Nineveh, and to give ear to the warnings of Jonah, prophet and whale-explorer, even so he was but dust and ashes for other sinners to

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cover themselves withal; but he, Moses Ansell, was the honoured master of his household, enjoying a foretaste of the lollings of the righteous in Paradise; nay, more, dispensing hospitality to the poor and the hungry. Little fleas have lesser fleas, and Moses Ansell had never fallen so low but that, on this night of nights, when the slave sits with the master on equal terms, he could manage to entertain a Passover guest, usually some newly-arrived *Greener*, or some nondescript waif and stray returned to Judaism for the occasion and accepting a seat at the board in that spirit of *camaraderie* which is one of the most delightful features of the Jewish pauper. *Seder* was a ceremonial to be taken in none too solemn and sober a spirit, and there was an abundance of unreproved giggling throughout from the little ones, especially in those happy days when mother was alive and tried to steal the *Afikuman*, or *Motso* specially laid aside for the final morsel, only to be surrendered to father when he promised to grant her whatever she wished. Alas! it is to be feared Mrs. Ansell's wishes did not soar high. There was more giggling when the youngest talking son—it was poor Benjamin in Esther's earliest recollections—opened the ball by inquiring in a peculiarly pitched incantation, and with an air of blank ignorance, why this night differed from

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all other nights—in view of the various astonishing peculiarities of food and behaviour (enumerated in detail) visible to his vision. To which Moses and the *Bube* and the rest of the company, including the questioner, invariably replied in corresponding sing-song: 'Slaves have we been in Egypt,' proceeding to recount at great length, stopping for refreshment in the middle, the never-cloying tale of the great deliverance, with irrelevant digressions concerning Haman and Daniel and the wise men of Bona Berak, the whole of this most ancient of the world's extant domestic rituals terminating with an allegorical ballad like the 'house that Jack built,' concerning a kid that was eaten by a cat, which was bitten by a dog, which was beaten by a stick, which was burnt by a fire, which was quenched by some water, which was drunk by an ox, which was slaughtered by a slaughterer, who was slain by the Angel of Death, who was slain by the Holy One—blessed be He!

In wealthy houses this *Agadah* was read from manuscripts with rich illuminations—the one development of pictorial art among the Jews—but the Asenlls had wretchedly-printed little books containing quaint but unintentionally comic woodcuts, pre-Raphaelite in perspective

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and ludicrous in draughtsmanship, depicting the miracles of the redemption, Moses burying the Egyptian, and sundry other passages of the text. In one a king was praying in the Temple to an exploding bomb intended to represent the Shechinah, or Divine glory. In another, Sarah, attired in a matronly cap and a fashionable jacket and skirt, was standing behind the door of the tent, a solid detached villa on the brink of a lake whereon ships and gondolas floated, what time Abraham welcomed the three celestial messengers, unobtrusively disguised with heavy pinions.

What delight as the quaffing of each of the four cups of wine loomed in sight; what disappointment and mutual bantering when the cup had merely to be raised in the hand; what chaff of the greedy Solomon, who was careful not to throw away a drop during the digital manœuvres when the wine must be jerked from the cup at the mention of each plague! And what a solemn moment was that when the tallest goblet was filled to the brim for the delectation of the prophet Elijah, and the door thrown open for his entry. Could one not almost hear the rustling of the prophet's spirit through the room? And what though the level of the wine subsided not a

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barley-corn ? Elijah, though there was no difficulty in his being in all parts of the world simultaneously, could hardly compass the greater miracle of emptying so many million goblets. Historians have traced this custom of opening the door to the necessity of asking the world to look in and see for itself that no blood of Christian child figured in the ceremonial, and for once science has illumined naïve superstition with a tragic glow more poetic still. For the London Ghetto persecution had dwindled to an occasional bellowing through the keyhole, as the local rowdies heard the unaccustomed melodies trolled forth from jocund lungs, and then the singers would stop for a moment, startled, and someone would say : ' Oh, it's only a Christian rough,' and take up the thread of song.

And, then, when the *Afikuman* had been eaten, and the last cup of wine drunk, and it was time to go to bed, what a sweet sense of sanctity and security still reigned ! No need to say your prayers to-night, beseeching the guardian of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, to watch over you, and chase away the evil spirits. The angels are with you, Gabriel on your right, and Raphael on your left, and Michael behind you.

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All about the Ghetto the light of the Passover rested, transfiguring the dreary rooms and illumining the drab lives.

Dutch Debby sat beside Mrs. Simons at the table of that good soul's married daughter, the same who had suckled little Sarah. Esther's frequent eulogiums had secured the poor lonely narrow-chested seamstress this enormous concession and privilege. Bobby squatted on the mat in the passage ready to challenge Elijah. At this table there were two pieces of fried fish, sent to Mrs. Simons by Esther Ansell. They represented the greatest revenge of Esther's life, and she felt remorseful towards Malka, remembering to whose gold she owed this proud moment. She made up her mind to write her a letter of apology in her best hand.

At the Belcovitches' the ceremonial was long, for the master of it insisted on translating the Hebrew into Jargon, phrase by phrase; but no one found it tedious, especially after supper. Pesach was there, hand-in-hand with Fanny, their wedding very near now; and Becky lolled royally in all her glory, aggressive of ringlet, insolently unattached, a conscious beacon of bedazzlement to the pauper Pullack we last met at Reb Shemuel's Sabbath table;

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and there, too, was Chayah, she of the ill-matched legs. Be sure that Malka had returned the clothes-brush, and was throned in complacent majesty at Milly's table, and that Sugarman the Shadchan forgave his monocular consort her lack of a fourth uncle, while Joseph Strelitski, dreamer of dreams, rich with commissions from 'Passover' cigars, brooded on the Great Exodus. Nor could the Shalotten Shammos be other than beaming, ordering the complex ceremonial with none to contradict; nor Karlkammer be otherwhere than in the seven hundred and seventy-seventh heaven, which, calculated by *Gematriyah*, can easily be reduced to the seventh.

Shosshi Shmendrik did not fail to explain the deliverance to the ex-widow Finkelstein, nor Guedalyah the Greengrocer omit to hold his annual revel at the head of half a hundred merry 'pauper aliens.' Christian roughs might bawl derisively in the street, especially when doors were opened for Elijah, but hard words break no bones, and the Ghetto was uplifted above insult.

* * * * *

Melchitzedek Pinchas was the Passover guest at Reb Shemuel's table, for the reek of his Sabbath cigar had not penetrated to the old

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man's nostrils. It was a great night for Pinchas, wrought up to fervid nationalistic aspirations by the memory of the Egyptian deliverance, which he yet regarded as mythical in its details. It was a terrible night for Hannah, sitting opposite to him, under the fire of his poetic regard. She was pale and rigid, moving and speaking mechanically. Her father glanced towards her every now and again compassionately, but with trust that the worst was over. Her mother realized the crisis much less keenly than he, not having been in the heart of the storm. She had never even seen her intended son-in-law, except through the lens of a camera. She was sorry, that was all. Now that Hannah had broken the ice, and encouraged one young man, there was hope for the others.

Hannah's state of mind was divined by neither parent. Love itself is blind in those tragic silences which divide souls.

All night after that agonizing scene she did not sleep; the feverish activity of her mind rendered sleep impossible, and unerring instinct told her that David was awake also, that they two, amid the silence of a sleeping city, wrestled in the darkness with the same terrible problem, and were never so much at one as in this, their

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separation. A letter came for her in the morning. It was unstamped, and had evidently been dropped into the letter-box by David's hand. It appointed an interview at ten o'clock at a corner of the Ruins; of course he could not come to the house. Hannah went out with a little basket to make some purchases. There was a cheery hum of life about the Ghetto, a pleasant Festival bustle; the air resounded with the raucous clucking of innumerable fowls on their way to the feather-littered, blood-stained shambles, where professional cut-throats wielded sacred knives; boys armed with little braziers of glowing coal ran about the Ruins, offering halfpenny pyres for the immolation of the last crumbs of leaven. Nobody paid the slightest attention to the two tragic figures, whose lives turned on the brief moments of conversation snatched in the thick of the hurrying crowd.

David's clouded face lightened a little as he saw Hannah advancing towards him.

'I knew you would come,' he said, taking her hand for a moment. His palm burnt; hers was cold and limp. The stress of a great tempest of emotion had driven the blood from her face and limbs, but inwardly she was on fire. As they looked, each read revolt in the other's eyes.

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'Let us walk on,' he said.

They moved slowly forwards. The ground was slippery and muddy under foot. The sky was gray. But the gaiety of the crowd neutralized the dull squalor of the scene.

'Well?' he said in a low tone.

'I thought you had something to propose,' she murmured.

'Let me carry your basket.'

'No, no; go on. What have you determined?'

'Not to give you up, Hannah, while I live.'

'Ah!' she said quietly. 'I have thought it all over, too, and I shall not leave you. But our marriage by Jewish law is impossible; we could not marry at any synagogue without my father's knowledge; and he would at once inform the authorities of the bar to our union.'

'I know, dear. But let us go to America, where no one will know. There we shall find plenty of Rabbis to marry us. There is nothing to tie me to this country. I can start my business in America just as well as here. Your parents, too, will think more kindly of you when you are across the seas. Forgiveness is easier at a distance. What do you say, dear?'

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She shook her head.

'Why should we be married in a synagogue?' she asked.

'Why?' repeated he, puzzled.

'Yes, why?'

'Because we are Jews.'

'You would use Jewish forms to outwit Jewish laws?' she asked quietly.

'No, no. Why should you put it that way? I don't doubt the Bible is all right in making the laws it does; after the first heat of my anger was over, I saw the whole thing in its proper bearings. Those laws about priests were only intended for the days when we had a Temple, and in any case they cannot apply to a merely farcical divorce like yours. It is these old fools—I beg your pardon—it is these fanatical Rabbis who insist on giving them a rigidity God never meant them to have, just as they still make a fuss about *kosher* meat. In America they are less strict; besides, they won't know I am a *Cohen*.'

'No, David,' said Hannah firmly. 'There must be no more deceit. What need have we to seek the sanction of any Rabbi? If Jewish law cannot marry us without our hiding something, then I will have nothing to do with Jewish law. You know my opinions; I

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haven't gone so deeply into religious questions as you have——'

'Don't be sarcastic,' he interrupted.

'I have always been sick to death of this eternal ceremony, this endless coil of laws winding round us and cramping our lives at every turn; and now it has become too oppressive to be borne any longer. Why should we let it ruin our lives? And why, if we determine to break from it, shall we pretend to keep to it? What do you care for Judaism? You eat *Triphas*, you smoke on Shabbos when you want to——'

'Yes, I know; perhaps I'm wrong. But everybody does it nowadays. When I was a boy nobody dared be seen riding in a 'bus on Shabbos; now you meet lots. But all that is only old-fashioned Judaism. There must be a God, else we shouldn't be here, and it's impossible to believe that Jesus was He. A man must have some religion, and there isn't anything better. But that's neither here nor there. If you don't care for my plan,' he concluded anxiously, 'what's yours?'

'Let us be married honestly by a registrar.'

'Any way you like, dear,' he said readily, 'so long as we are married—and quickly.'

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'As quickly as you like.'

He seized her disengaged hand and pressed it passionately.

'That's my own darling Hannah! Oh, if you could realize what I felt last night when you seemed to be drifting away from me!'

There was an interval of silence, each thinking excitedly. Then David said:

'But have you the courage to do this and remain in London?'

'I have courage for anything. But, as you say, it might be better to travel. It will be less of a break if we break away altogether—change everything at once. It sounds contradictory, but you understand what I mean.'

'Perfectly. It is difficult to live a new life with all the old things round you. Besides, why should we give our friends the chance to cold-shoulder us? They will find all sorts of malicious reasons why we were not married in a *Shool*, and, if they hit on the true one, they may even regard our marriage as illegal. Let us go to America, as I proposed.'

'Very well. Do we go direct from London?'

'No, from Liverpool.'

'Then we can be married at Liverpool before sailing.'

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'A good idea. But when do we start?'

'At once—to-night. The sooner the better.'

He looked at her quickly.

'Do you mean it?' he said. His heart beat violently, as if it would burst. Waves of dazzling colour swam before his eyes.

'I mean it,' she said gravely and quietly. 'Do you think I could face my father and mother, knowing I was about to wound them to the heart? Each day of delay would be torture to me. Oh, why is religion such a curse?' She paused, overwhelmed for a moment by the emotion she had been suppressing. She resumed, in the same quiet manner: 'Yes, we must break away at once. We have kept our last Passover. We shall have to eat leavened food—it will be a decisive break. Take me to Liverpool, David, this very day. You are my chosen husband—I trust in you.'

She looked at him frankly with her dark eyes, that stood out in lustrous relief against the pale skin. He gazed into those eyes, and a flash as from the inner heaven of purity pierced his soul.

'Thank you, dearest,' he said in a voice with tears in it.

They walked on silently. Speech was as

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superfluous as it was inadequate. When they spoke again, their voices were calm; the peace that comes of resolute decision was theirs at last, and each was full of the joy of daring greatly for the sake of their mutual love. Petty as their departure from convention might seem to the stranger, to them it loomed as a violent breach with all the traditions of the Ghetto and their past lives; they were venturing forth into untrodden paths, holding each other's hand.

Jostling the loquacious crowd in the unsavoury byways of the Ghetto, in the gray chillness of a cloudy morning, Hannah seemed to herself to walk in enchanted gardens, breathing the scent of love's own roses mingled with the keen salt air that blew in from the sea of liberty. A fresh, new, blessed life was opening before her; the clogging vapours of the past were rolling away at last; the unreasoning, instinctive rebellion, bred of ennui and brooding dissatisfaction with the conditions of her existence and with the people about her, had by a curious series of accidents been hastened to its acutest development; thought had at last fermented into active resolution; and the anticipation of action flooded her soul with peace and joy in which all recollection of outside humanity was submerged.

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'What time can you be ready by?' he said before they parted.

'Any time,' she answered. 'I can take nothing with me—I dare not pack anything. I suppose I can get necessaries in Liverpool. I have merely my hat and cloak to put on.'

'But that will be enough,' he said ardently. 'I want but you.'

'I know it, dear,' she answered gently. 'If you were as other Jewish young men I could not give up all else for you.'

'You shall never regret it, Hannah,' he said, moved to his depths, as the full extent of her sacrifice for love dawned upon him. He was a vagabond on the face of the earth, but she was tearing herself away from deep roots in the soil of home, as well as from the conventions of her circle and her sex. Once again he trembled with a sense of unworthiness, a sudden anxious doubt if he were noble enough to repay her trust. Mastering his emotion, he went on: 'I reckon my packing and arrangements for leaving the country will take me all day at least. I must see my bankers, if nobody else. I shan't take leave of anybody—that would arouse suspicion. I will be at the corner of your street with a cab at nine, and we'll catch the ten o'clock express from Euston. If we missed

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that, we should have to wait till midnight. It will be dark; no one is likely to notice me. I will get a dressing-case for you, and anything else I can think of, and add it to my luggage.'

'Very well,' she said simply.

They did not kiss; she gave him her hand, and, with a sudden inspiration, he slipped the ring he had brought the day before on her finger. The tears came into her eyes as she saw what he had done. They looked at each other through a mist, feeling bound beyond human intervention.

'Good-bye,' she faltered.

'Good-bye,' he said. 'At nine.'

'At nine,' she breathed, and hurried off without looking behind.

It was a hard day, the minutes crawling reluctantly into the hours, the hours dragging themselves wearily on towards the night. It was typical April weather—squalls and sunshine in capricious succession. When it drew towards dusk, she put on her best clothes for the Festival, stuffing a few precious mementoes into her pockets, and wearing her father's portrait next to her lover's at her breast. She hung a travelling-cloak and a hat on a peg near the hall-door, ready to hand as she left the

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house. Of little use was she in the kitchen that day, but her mother was tender to her as knowing her sorrow. Time after time Hannah ascended to her bedroom to take a last look at the things she had grown so tired of—the little iron bed, the wardrobe, the framed lithographs, the jug and basin with their floral designs. All things seemed strangely dear now she was seeing them for the last time. Hannah turned over everything—even the little curling-iron, and the cardboard box full of tags and rags of ribbon and chiffon and lace and crushed artificial flowers, and the fans with broken sticks, and the stays with broken ribs, and the petticoats with dingy frills, and the twelve-button ball-gloves with dirty fingers, and the soiled pink wraps. Some of her books, especially her school-prizes, she would have liked to take with her, but that could not be. She went over the rest of the house, too, from top to bottom. It weakened her, but she could not conquer the impulse of farewell. Finally, she wrote a letter to her parents, and hid it under her looking-glass, knowing they would search her room for traces of her. She looked curiously at herself as she did so; the colour had not returned to her cheeks. She knew she was pretty, and always strove to look nice for the mere pleasure

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of the thing. All her instincts were æsthetic. Now she had the air of a saint wrought up to spiritual exaltation. She was almost frightened by the vision. She had seen her face frowning, weeping, overcast with gloom; never with an expression so fateful. It seemed as if her resolution was writ large upon every feature for all to read.

In the evening she accompanied her father to *Shool*. She did not often go in the evening, and the thought of going only suddenly occurred to her. Heaven alone knew if she would ever enter a synagogue again; the visit would be part of her systematic farewell. Reb Shemuel took it as a symptom of resignation to the will of God, and he laid his hand lightly on her head in silent blessing, his eyes uplifted gratefully to heaven. Too late Hannah felt the misconception, and was remorseful. For the Festival occasion Reb Shemuel elected to worship at the Great Synagogue; Hannah, seated among the sparse occupants of the ladies' gallery and mechanically fingering a *Machzor*, looked down for the last time on the crowded auditorium, where the men sat in high hats and holiday garments. Tall wax-candles twinkled everywhere—in great gilt chandeliers depending from the ceiling, in sconces stuck about the window-ledges, in candelabra

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branching from the walls. There was an air of holy joy about the solemn old structure, with its massive pillars, its small side-windows, its high ornate roof and skylights, and its gilt-lettered tablets to the memory of pious donors.

The congregation gave the responses with joyous unction. Some of the worshippers tempered their devotion by petty gossip, and the beadle marshalled the men in low hats within the iron railings, sonorously sounding his automatic Amens. But to-night Hannah had no eye for the humours that were wont to awaken her scornful amusement; a real emotion possessed her—the same emotion of farewell which she had experienced in her own bedroom. Her eyes wandered towards the Ark, surmounted by the stone tablets of the Decalogue, and the sad dark orbs filled with the brooding light of childish reminiscence. Once when she was a little girl her father told her that on Passover night an angel sometimes came out of the doors of the Ark from among the scrolls of the Law. For years she looked out for that angel, keeping her eyes patiently fixed on the curtain. At last she gave him up, concluding her vision was insufficiently purified, or that he was exhibiting at other synagogues. To-night her childish fancy recurred to her; she found herself in-

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voluntarily looking towards the Ark and half expectant of the angel.

She had not thought of the *Seder* service she would have to partially sit through, when she made her appointment with David in the morning, but when during the day it occurred to her, a cynical smile traversed her lips. How apposite it was! To-night would mark *her* exodus from slavery. Like her ancestors leaving Egypt, she too would partake of a meal in haste, staff in hand, ready for the journey. With what stout heart would she set forth—she, too, towards the promised land! Thus had she thought some hours since, but her mood was changed now. The nearer the *Seder* approached, the more she shrank from the family ceremonial. A panic terror almost seized her now, in the synagogue, when the picture of the domestic interior flashed again before her mental vision; she felt like flying into the street, on towards her lover, without ever looking behind.

Oh, why could David not have fixed the hour earlier, so as to spare her an ordeal so trying to the nerves? The black-stoled choir was singing sweetly; Hannah banished her foolish flutter of alarm by joining in, quietly, for congregational singing was regarded rather as an intrusion on the privileges of the choir, and calculated to put

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the singers out in their elaborate four-part fugues unaided by an organ.

'"With everlasting love hast Thou loved the house of Israel, Thy people,"' she sang: '"a Law and commandments, statutes and judgments, hast Thou taught us. Therefore, O Lord our God, when we lie down and when we rise up we will meditate on Thy statutes; yea, we will rejoice in the words of Thy Law and in Thy commandments for ever, for they are our life and the length of our days, and we will meditate on them day and night. And mayest Thou never take away Thy love from us. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who lovest Thy people Israel.'

Hannah scanned the English version of the Hebrew in her *Machzor* as she sang. Though she could translate every word, the meaning of what she sang was never completely conceived by her consciousness. The power of song over the soul depends but little on the words. Now the words seemed fateful, pregnant with special message. Her eyes were misty when the fugues were over. Again she looked towards the Ark, with its beautifully embroidered curtain, behind which were the precious scrolls, with their silken swathes and their golden bells and shields and pomegranates. Ah, if the angel would come out now! If only the dazzling vision gleamed

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for a moment on the white steps! Oh, why did he not come and save her?

Save her? From what? She asked herself the question fiercely, in defiance of the still, small voice. What wrong had she ever done that she so young and gentle should be forced to make so cruel a choice between the old and the new? This was the synagogue she should have been married in, stepping gloriously and honourably under the canopy amid the pleasant excitement of a congratulatory company. And now she was being driven to exile and the chillness of secret nuptials. No, no; she did not want to be saved, in the sense of being kept in the fold; it was the creed that was culpable, not she.

The service drew to an end. The choir sang the final hymn, the *Chazan* giving the last verse at great length, and with many musical flourishes.

'"The dead will God quicken in the abundance of His lovingkindness. Blessed for evermore be His glorious name."'

There was a clattering of reading-flaps and seat-lids, and the congregation poured out amid the buzz of mutual 'Good-*Yomtov's*.' Hannah rejoined her father, the sense of injury and revolt still surging in her breast. In the fresh starlit air, stepping along the wet gleam-

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ing pavements, she shook off the last influences of the synagogue; all her thoughts converged on the meeting with David, on the wild flight northwards while good Jews were sleeping off the supper in celebration of their Redemption; her blood coursed quickly through her veins, she was in a fever of impatience for the hour to come.

And thus it was that she sat at the *Seder* table, as in a dream, with images of desperate adventure flitting in her brain. The face of her lover floated before her eyes, close, close to her own, as it should have been to-night, had there been justice in heaven. Now and again the scene about her flashed in upon her consciousness, piercing her to the heart. When Levi asked the introductory question, it set her wondering what would become of him. Would manhood bring enfranchisement to him as womanhood was doing to her? What sort of life would he lead the poor Reb and his wife? The omens were scarcely auspicious. But a man's charter is so much wider than a woman's, and Levi might do much without paining them as she would pain them. Poor father! The white hairs were predominating in his beard; she had never noticed before how old he was getting. And mother—her face was quite wrinkled. Ah, well, we must all grow old. What a curious man Melchitzedek

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Pinchas was, singing so heartily the wonderful story! Judaism certainly produced some curious types. A smile crossed her face as she thought of herself as his bride.

At supper she strove to eat a little, knowing she would need it. In bringing some plates from the kitchen, she looked at her hat and cloak carefully hung up on the peg in the hall nearest the street door. It would take but a second to slip them on. She nodded her head towards them, as who should say, 'Yes, we shall meet again very soon.' During the meal she found herself listening to the poet's monologues, delivered in his high-pitched, creaking voice.

Melchitzedek Pinchas had much to say about a certain actor-manager who had spoiled the greatest Jargon-play of the century, and a certain labour-leader who, out of the funds of his gulls, had subsidized the audience to stay away, and (though here the Reb cut him short for Hannah's sake) a certain leading lady, one of the quartette of mistresses of a certain clergyman, who had been beguiled by her paramour into joining the great English conspiracy to hound down Melchitzedek Pinchas, all of whom he would shoot presently, and had in the meantime enshrined like dead flies in the amber of immortal acrostics. The wind began to shake

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the shutters as they finished supper, and presently the rain began to patter afresh against the panes. Reb Shemuel distributed the pieces of *Afikuman* with a happy sigh, and lolling on his pillows and almost forgetting his family troubles in the sense of Israel's blessedness, began to chant the grace like the saints in the Psalm who sing aloud on their couches. The little Dutch clock on the mantelpiece began to strike. Hannah did not move. Pale and trembling, she sat riveted to her chair. One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight. She counted the strokes: as if to count them was the only means of telling the hour! as if her eyes had not been following the hands creeping, creeping! She had a mad hope the striking would cease with the eight, and there would be still time to think. *Nine!* She waited, her ear longing for the tenth stroke. If it were only ten o'clock, it would be too late. The danger would be over. She sat, mechanically watching the hands. They crept on. It was five minutes past the hour. She felt sure that David was already at the corner of the street, getting wet and a little impatient. She half rose from her chair. It was not a nice night for an elopement. She sank back into her seat. Perhaps they had best wait till to-morrow night. She would go and tell David

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so. But then, he would not mind the weather; once they had met he would bundle her into the cab and they would roll off, leaving the old world irrevocably behind. She sat in a paralysis of volition — rigid on her chair, magnetized by the warm comfortable room, the old familiar furniture, the Passover table, with its white tablecloth and its decanters and wineglasses, the faces of her father and mother eloquent with the appeal of a thousand memories. The clock ticked on loudly, fiercely, like a summoning drum; the rain beat an impatient tattoo on the window-panes; the wind rattled the doors and casements. 'Go forth, go forth!' they called; 'go forth where your lover waits you, to bear you off into the new and the unknown.' And the louder they called the louder Reb Shemuel trolled his hilarious grace: '"May He who maketh peace in the high heavens bestow peace upon us, and upon all Israel, and say ye Amen."'

The hands of the clock crept on. It was half-past nine. Hannah sat lethargic, numb, unable to think, her strung-up nerves grown flaccid, her eyes full of bitter-sweet tears, her soul floating along as in a trance on the waves of familiar melody. Suddenly she became aware that the others had risen, and that her father was motioning to her. Instinctively

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she understood; rose automatically, and went to the door; then a great shock of returning recollection whelmed her soul. She stood rooted to the floor. Her father had filled Elijah's goblet with wine, and it was her annual privilege to open the door for the prophet's entry. Intuitively she knew that David was pacing madly in front of the house, not daring to make known his presence, and perhaps cursing her cowardice. A chill terror seized her. She was afraid to face him; his will was strong and mighty, her fevered imagination figured it as the wash of a great ocean breaking on the doorstep, threatening to sweep her off into the roaring whirlpool of doom. She threw the door of the room wide, and paused as if her duty were done.

'*Nu, nu*,' muttered Reb Shemuel, indicating the outer door.

It was so near that he always had that opened, too.

Hannah tottered forwards through the few feet of hall. The cloak and hat on the peg nodded to her sardonically. A wild thrill of answering defiance shot through her; she stretched out her hand towards them. 'Fly, fly! it is your last chance,' said the blood throbbing in her ears. But her hand dropped to her side, and in that brief instant of terrible

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illumination Hannah saw down the whole long vista of her future life stretching straight and unlovely between great blank walls, on, on to a solitary grave; knew that the strength had been denied her to diverge to the right or the left, that for her there would be neither Exodus nor Redemption. Strong in the conviction of her weakness, she noisily threw open the street-door. The face of David, sallow and ghastly, loomed upon her in the darkness. Great drops of rain fell from his hat and ran down his cheeks like tears. His clothes seemed soaked with rain.

'At last!' he exclaimed, in a hoarse, glad whisper. 'What has kept you?'

'*Boruch Habo!* Welcome art thou who arrivest!' came the voice of Reb Shemuel from within, greeting the prophet.

'Hush!' said Hannah. 'Listen a moment.'

The sing-song undulations of the old Rabbi's voice mingled harshly with the wail of the wind. '"Pour out Thy wrath on the heathen who acknowledge Thee not, and upon the kingdoms which invoke not Thy name; for they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his Temple. Pour out Thy indignation upon them, and cause Thy fierce anger to overtake them. Pursue them in wrath, and destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord."'

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'Quick, Hannah!' whispered David. 'We can't wait a moment more. Put on your things. We shall miss the train.'

A sudden inspiration came to her. For answer she drew his ring out of her pocket, and slipped it into his hand.

'Good-bye!' she murmured in a strange, hollow voice; and slammed the street-door in his face.

'Hannah!'

His startled cry of agony and despair penetrated the woodwork, muffled to an inarticulate shriek. He rattled the door violently in unreasoning frenzy.

'Who's that? What's that noise?' asked the Rebbitzin.

'Only some Christian rough shouting in the street,' answered Hannah.

It was truer than she knew.

* * * * *

The rain fell faster, the wind grew shriller, but the Children of the Ghetto basked by their firesides in faith and hope and contentment. Hunted from shore to shore through the ages, they had found the national aspiration—Peace—in a country where Passover came without menace of blood. In the garret of No. 1 Royal Street little Esther Ansell sat brooding, her heart full of a vague tender poetry, and

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penetrated by the beauties of Judaism, which, please God, she would always cling to, her childish vision looking forward hopefully to the larger life that the years would bring.

END OF BOOK I.

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BOOK II.—THE GRANDCHILDREN OF THE GHETTO.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

DAINTILY-EMBROIDERED napery, beautiful porcelain, Queen Anne silver, exotic flowers, glittering glass, soft rosy light, creamy expanses of shirt-front, elegant low-necked dresses — all the conventional accompaniments of Occidental gastronomy.

It was not a large party. Mrs. Henry Goldsmith professed to collect guests on artistic principles, as she did *bric-à-bac,* and with an eye to general conversation. The elements of the social salad were sufficiently incongruous to-night, yet all the ingredients were Jewish.

For the history of the Grandchildren of the Ghetto, which is mainly a history of the middle classes, is mainly a history of isolation.

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'The Upper Ten' is a literal phrase in Judah, whose aristocracy just about suffices for a synagogue quorum. Great majestic luminaries, each with its satellites, they swim serenely in the golden heavens. And the middle classes look up in worship, and the lower classes in supplication. 'The Upper Ten' have no spirit of exclusiveness; they are willing to entertain royalty, rank and the arts with a catholic hospitality that is only Eastern in its magnificence, while some of them remain Jews only for fear of being considered snobs by society. But the middle-class Jew has been more jealous of his caste, and for caste reasons. To exchange hospitalities with the Christian when you cannot eat his dinners were to get the worst of the bargain; to invite his sons to your house when they cannot marry your daughters were to solicit awkward complications. In business, in civic affairs, in politics, the Jew has mixed freely with his fellow-citizens; but indiscriminate social relations only become possible through a religious decadence which they in turn accelerate. A Christian in a company of middle-class Jews is like a lion in a den of Daniels. They show him deference and their prophetic side.

Mrs. Henry Goldsmith was of the upper middle classes, and her husband was the

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financial representative of the Kensington Synagogue at the United Council; but her swan-like neck was still bowed beneath the yoke of North London, not to say provincial, Judaism. So to-night there were none of those external indications of Christmas which are so frequent at 'good' Jewish houses—no plum-pudding, snapdragon, mistletoe, not even a Christmas-tree. For Mrs. Henry Goldsmith did not countenance these coquettings with Christianity. She would have told you that the incidence of her dinner on Christmas Eve was merely an accident, though a lucky accident, in so far as Christmas found Jews perforce at leisure for social gatherings. What she was celebrating was the Feast of Chanukah—of the re-dedication of the Temple after the pollutions of Antiochus Epiphanes—and the memory of the national hero, Judas Maccabæus. Christmas crackers would have been incompatible with the Chanukah candles which the housekeeper, Mary O'Reilly, forced her master to light, and would have shocked that devout old dame. For Mary O'Reilly, as good a soul as she was a Catholic, had lived all her life with Jews, assisting while yet a girl in the kitchen of Henry Goldsmith's father, who was a pattern of ancient piety and a prop of the Great Synagogue. When the father died, Mary, with all

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the other family belongings, passed into the hands of the son, who came up to London from a provincial town, and, with a grateful recollection of her motherliness, domiciled her in his own establishment. Mary knew all the ritual laws and ceremonies far better than her new mistress, who, although a native of the provincial town in which Mr. Henry Goldsmith had established a thriving business, had received her education at a Brussels boarding-school. Mary knew exactly how long to keep the meat in salt, and the heinousness of frying steaks in butter. She knew that the fire must not be poked on the Sabbath, nor the gas lit or extinguished, and that her master must not smoke till three stars appeared in the sky. She knew when the family must fast, and when and how it must feast. She knew all the Hebrew and Jargon expressions which her employers studiously boycotted, and she was the only member of the household who used them habitually in her intercourse with the other members. Too late the Henry Goldsmiths awoke to the consciousness of her tyranny, which did not permit them to be irreligious even in private. In the fierce light which beats upon a provincial town with only one synagogue, they had been compelled to conform outwardly with many galling restrictions, and

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they had sub-consciously looked forward to emancipation in the mighty Metropolis. But Mary had such implicit faith in their piety, and was so zealous in the practice of her own faith, that they had not the courage to confess that they scarcely cared a pin about a good deal of that for which she was so solicitous. They hesitated to admit that they did not respect their religion (or what she thought was their religion) as much as she did hers. It would have equally lowered them in her eyes to admit that their religion was not so good as hers, besides being disrespectful to the cherished memory of her ancient master. At first they had deferred to Mary's Jewish prejudices out of good-nature and carelessness, but every day strengthened her hold upon them; every act of obedience to the ritual law was a tacit acknowledgment of its sanctity, which made it more and more difficult to disavow its obligation. The dread of shocking Mary came to dominate their lives, and the fashionable house near Kensington Gardens was still a veritable centre of true Jewish orthodoxy, with little to make old Aaron Goldsmith turn in his grave.

It is probable, though, that Mrs. Henry Goldsmith would have kept a *kosher* table even if Mary had never been born. Many of their acquaintances and relatives were of an orthodox

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turn. A *kosher* dinner could be eaten even by the heterodox, whereas a *tripha* dinner choked off the orthodox. Thus it came about that even the Rabbinate might safely stoke its spiritual fires at Mrs. Henry Goldsmith's.

Hence, too, the prevalent craving for a certain author's blood could not be gratified at Mrs. Henry Goldsmith's Chanukah dinner. Besides, nobody knew where to lay hands upon Edward Armitage, the author in question, whose opprobrious production, 'Mordecai Josephs,' had scandalized West-End Judaism.

'Why didn't he describe our circle?' asked the hostess, an angry fire in her beautiful eyes. 'It would have at least corrected the picture. As it is, the public will fancy that we are all daubed with the same brush—that we have no thought in life beyond dress, money and solo-whist.'

'He probably painted the life he knew,' said Sidney Graham, in defence.

'Then I am sorry for him,' retorted Mrs. Goldsmith. 'It's a great pity he had such detestable acquaintances. Of course, he has cut himself off from the possibility of any better now.'

The wavering flush on her lovely face darkened with disinterested indignation, and her beautiful bosom heaved with judicial grief.

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'I should hope so,' put in Miss Cissy Levine sharply. She was a pale, bent woman, with spectacles, who believed in the mission of Israel, and wrote domestic novels to prove that she had no sense of humour. 'No one has a right to foul his own nest. Are there not plenty of subjects for the Jew's pen without his attacking his own people? The calumniator of his race should be ostracized from decent society.'

'As according to him there is none,' laughed Sidney Graham, 'I cannot see where the punishment comes in.'

'Oh, he may say so in that book,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels, an amiable, loose-thinking lady of florid complexion, who dabbled exasperatingly in her husband's philanthropic concerns from a vague idea that the wife of a committee-man is a committee-woman. 'But he knows better.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Mr. Montagu Samuels. 'The rascal has only written it to make money. He knows it's all exaggeration and distortion. But anything spicy pays nowadays.'

'As a West Indian merchant, he ought to know,' murmured Sidney Graham to his charming cousin, Adelaide Leon.

The girl's soft eyes twinkled as she surveyed the serious little City magnate with his placid

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spouse. Montagu Samuels was narrow-minded and narrow-chested, and managed to be pompous on a meagre allowance of body. He was earnest and charitable (except in religious wrangles, when he was earnest and uncharitable), and knew himself a pillar of the community, an exemplar to the drones and sluggards who shirked their share of public burdens and were callous to the dazzlement of communal honours.

'Of course it was written for money, Monty,' his brother, Percy Saville, the stockbroker, reminded him. 'What else do authors write for? It's the way they earn their living.'

Strangers found difficulty in understanding the fraternal relation of Percy Saville and Montagu Samuels, and did not readily grasp that Percy Saville was an Anglican version of Pizer Samuels, more in tune with the handsome, well-dressed personality it denoted. Montagu had stuck loyally to his colours, but Pizer had drooped under the burden of carrying his patronymic through the theatrical and artistic circles he favoured after business hours. Of such is the brotherhood of Israel.

'The whole book's written with gall,' went on Percy Saville emphatically. 'I suppose the man couldn't get into good Jewish houses, and he's revenged himself by slandering them.'

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'Then he ought to have got into good Jewish houses,' said Sidney. 'The man has talent, nobody can deny that, and if he couldn't get into good Jewish society because he didn't have money enough, isn't that proof enough his picture is true?'

'I don't deny that there are people among us who make money the one Open Sesame to their houses,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith magnanimously.

'Deny it, indeed! Money is the Open Sesame to everything,' rejoined Sidney Graham, delightedly scenting an opening for a screed. He liked to talk bombshells, and did not often get pillars of the community to shatter. 'Money manages the schools and the charities and the synagogues, and indirectly controls the press. A small body of persons—always the same—sits on all councils, on all boards! Why? Because they pay the piper.'

'Well, sir, and is not that a good reason?' asked Montagu Samuels. 'The community is to be congratulated on having a few public-spirited men left in days when there are wealthy German Jews in our midst who not only disavow Judaism, but refuse to support its institutions. But, Mr. Graham, I would join issue with you. The men you allude to are elected, not because they are rich, but because they are

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good men of business, and most of the work to be done is financial.'

'Exactly,' said Sidney Graham in sinister agreement. 'I have always maintained that the United Synagogue could be run as a joint-stock company for the sake of a dividend, and that there wouldn't be an atom of difference in the discussions if the councillors were directors. I do believe the pillars of the community figure the Millennium as a time when every Jew shall have enough to eat, a place to worship in, and a place to be buried in. Their State Church is simply a financial system, to which the doctrines of Judaism happen to be tacked on. How many of the councillors believe in their established religion? Why, the very beadles of their synagogues are prone to surreptitious shrimps and unobtrusive oysters! Then take that institution for supplying *kosher* meat. I am sure there are lots of its committee who never inquire into the necrologies of their own chops and steaks, and who regard kitchen Judaism as obsolete; but, all the same, they look after the finances with almost fanatical zeal. Finance fascinates them. Long after Judaism has ceased to exist, excellent gentlemen will be found regulating its finances.'

There was that smile on the faces of the graver members of the party which arises

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from reluctance to take a dangerous speaker seriously.

Sidney Graham was one of those favourites of society who are allowed Touchstone's license. He had just as little wish to reform, and just as much wish to abuse, society as society has to be reformed and abused. He was a dark, bright-eyed young artist with a silky moustache. He had lived much in Paris, where he studied impressionism and perfected his natural talent for causerie, and his inborn preference for the hedonistic view of life. Fortunately he had plenty of money, for he was a cousin of Raphael Leon on the mother's side, and the remotest twigs of the Leon genealogical tree bear apples of gold. His real name was Abrahams, which is a shade too Semitic. Sidney was the black sheep of the family—good-natured to the core and artistic to the finger-tips, he was an avowed infidel in a world where avowal is the unpardonable sin. He did not even pretend to fast on the Day of Atonement. Still, Sidney Graham was a good deal talked of in artistic circles, his name was often in the newspapers, and so more orthodox people than Mrs. Henry Goldsmith were not averse from having him at their table, though they would have shrunk from being seen at his. Even Cousin Addie, who had a charming religious cast of mind,

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liked to be with him, though she ascribed this to family piety—for there is a wonderful solidarity about many Jewish families, the richer members of which assemble loyally at one another's births, marriages, funerals and card parties, often to the entire exclusion of outsiders. An ordinary well-regulated family (so prolific is the stream of life) will include in its bosom ample elements for every occasion.

'Really, Mr. Graham, I think you are wrong about the *kosher* meat,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith. 'Our statistics show no falling off in the number of bullocks killed, while there is a rise of two per cent. in the sheep slaughtered. No, Judaism is in a far more healthy condition than pessimists imagine. So far from sacrificing our ancient faith, we are learning to see how tuberculosis lurks in the lungs of unexamined carcases and is communicated to the consumer. As for the members of the *Shechitah* Board not eating *Kosher*, look at me.'

The only person who looked at the host was the hostess. Her look was one of approval—it could not be of æsthetic approval, like the look Percy Saville devoted to herself, for her husband was a cadaverous little man with prominent ears and teeth.

'And if Mr. Graham should ever join us on the Council of the United Synagogue,'

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added Montagu Samuels, addressing the table generally, 'he will discover that there is no communal problem with which we do not loyally grapple.'

'No, thank you,' said Sidney with a shudder. 'When I visit Raphael, I sometimes pick up a Jewish paper and amuse myself by reading the debates of your public bodies. I understand most of your verbiage is edited away,' he looked Montagu Samuels full in the face, with audacious naïveté; 'but there is enough left to show that our monotonous group of public men consists of narrow-minded mediocrities. The chief public work they appear to do, outside finance, is, when public exams. fall on Sabbaths or holidays, getting special dates for Jewish candidates, to whom these examinations are the avenues to atheism. They never see the joke. How can they? Why, they take even themselves seriously.'

'Oh, come!' said Miss Cissy Levine indignantly. 'You often see "laughter" in the reports.'

'That must mean the speaker was laughing,' explained Sidney, 'for you never see anything to make the audience laugh. I appeal to Mr. Montagu Samuels.'

'It is useless discussing a subject with a

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man who admittedly speaks without knowledge,' replied that gentleman with dignity.

'Well, how do you expect me to get the knowledge?' grumbled Sidney. 'You exclude the public from your gatherings—I suppose to prevent them rubbing shoulders with the swells, the privilege of being snubbed by whom is the reward of public service. Wonderfully practical idea that—to utilize snobbery as a communal force! The United Synagogue is founded on it. Your community coheres through it.'

'There you are scarcely fair,' said the hostess with a charming smile of reproof. 'Of course there are snobs amongst us, but is it not the same in all sects?'

'Emphatically not,' said Sidney. 'If one of our swells sticks to a shred of Judaism, people seem to think the God of Judah should be thankful; and if he goes to synagogue once or twice a year, it is regarded as a particular condescension to the Creator.'

'The mental attitude you caricature is not so snobbish as it seems,' said Raphael Leon, breaking into the conversation for the first time. 'The temptations to the wealthy and the honoured to desert their struggling brethren are manifold, and sad experience has made our race accustomed to the loss of its brightest sons.'

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'Thanks for the compliment, fair coz,' said Sidney, not without a complacent cynical pleasure in the knowledge that Raphael spoke truly, that he owed his own immunity from the obligations of the faith to his artistic success, and that the outside world was disposed to accord him a larger charter of morality on the same grounds. 'But if you can only deny nasty facts by accounting for them, I dare say Mr. Armitage's book will afford you ample opportunities for explanation. Or have Jews the brazenness to assert it is all invention?'

'No; no one would do that,' said Percy Saville, who had just done it. 'Certainly, there is a good deal of truth in the sketch of the ostentatious, over-dressed Johnsons, who, as everybody knows, are meant for the Jonases.'

'Oh yes,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith. 'And it's quite evident that the stockbroker who drops half his *h's* and all his poor acquaintances and believes in one Lord, is no other than Joel Friedman.'

'And the house where people drive up in broughams for supper and solo whist after the theatre is the Davises', in Maida Vale,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'Yes, the book's true enough,' began Mrs. Montagu Samuels. She stopped suddenly, catching her husband's eye, and the colour

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heightened on her florid cheek. 'What I say is,' she concluded awkwardly, 'he ought to have come among us, and shown the world a picture of the cultured Jews.'

'Quite so, quite so!' said the hostess. Then turning to the tall thoughtful-looking young man who had hitherto contributed but one remark to the conversation, she said, half in sly malice, half to draw him out: 'Now you, Mr. Leon, whose culture is certified by our leading University, what do you think of this latest portrait of the Jew?'

'I don't know; I haven't read it,' replied Raphael apologetically.

'No more have I,' murmured the table generally.

'I wouldn't touch it with a pitchfork,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'I think it's a shame they circulate it at the libraries,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels. 'I just glanced over it at Mrs. Hugh Marston's house. It's vile. There are actually Jargon words in it. Such vulgarity!'

'Shameful!' murmured Percy Saville; 'Mr. Lazarus was telling me about it. It's plain treachery and disloyalty, this putting of weapons into the hands of our enemies. Of course we have our faults, but we should be told of them privately or from the pulpit.'

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'That would be just as efficacious,' said Sidney admiringly.

'More efficacious,' said Percy Saville unsuspiciously. 'A preacher speaks with authority, but this penny-a-liner——'

'With truth?' queried Sidney.

Saville stopped, disgusted, and the hostess answered Sidney half coaxingly.

'Oh, I am sure you can't think that. The book is so one-sided. Not a word about our generosity, our hospitality, our domesticity—the thousand and one good traits all the world allows us.'

'Of course not; since all the world allows them, it was unnecessary,' said Sidney.

'I wonder the Chief Rabbi doesn't stop it,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels.

'My dear, how can he?' inquired her husband. 'He has no control over the publishing trade.

'He ought to talk to the man,' persisted Mrs. Samuels.

'But we don't even know who he is,' said Percy Saville; 'probably "Edward Armitage" is only a *nom de plume*. You'd be surprised to learn the real names of some of the literary celebrities I meet about.'

'Oh, if he's a Jew you may be sure it isn't his real name,' laughed Sidney. It was

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characteristic of him that he never spared a shot, even when himself hurt by the kick of the gun. Percy coloured slightly, unmollified by being in the same boat with the satirist.

'I have never seen the name in the subscription lists,' said the hostess with ready tact.

'There is an Armitage who subscribes two guineas a year to the Board of Guardians,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels. 'But his Christian name is George.'

'"Christian" name is distinctly good for "George,"' murmured Sidney.

'There was an Armitage who sent a cheque to the Russian Fund,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith; 'but that can't be an author: it was quite a large cheque!'

'I am sure I have seen Armitage among the Births, Marriages, and Deaths,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'How well read they all are in the national literature!' Sidney murmured to Addie.

Indeed, the sectarian advertisements served to knit the race together, counteracting the unravelling induced by the fashionable dispersion of Israel, and waxing the more important as the other links, the old traditional jokes, by-words, ceremonies, card-games, prejudices and tunes, which are more important than laws and more cementatory than ideals, were dis-

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appearing before the over-zealousness of a parvenu refinement that had not yet attained to self-confidence. The Anglo-Saxon stolidity of the West-End synagogue service, on week days entirely given over to paid praying-men, was a typical expression of the universal tendency to exchange the picturesque primitiveness of the Orient for the sobrieties of fashionable civilization. When Jeshurun waxed fat, he did not always kick, but he yearned to approximate as much as possible to John Bull without merging in him; to sink himself and yet not be absorbed—not to be, and yet to be. The attempt to realize the asymptote in human mathematics was not quite successful, too near an approach to John Bull generally assimilating Jeshurun away. For such is the nature of Jeshurun. Enfranchise him, give him his own way and you make a new man of him; persecute him and he is himself again.

'But if nobody has read the man's book,' Raphael Leon ventured to interrupt at last, 'is it quite fair to assume his book isn't fit to read?'

The shy dark little girl he had taken down to dinner darted an appreciative glance at her neighbour. It was in accordance with Raphael's usual anxiety to give the devil his due that he should be unwilling to condemn even the writer

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of an anti-Semitic novel unheard. But, then, it was an open secret in the family that Raphael was mad. They did their best to hush it up, but among themselves they pitied him behind his back. Even Sidney considered his cousin Raphael pushed a dubious virtue too far, in treating people's very prejudices with the deference due to earnest, reasoned opinions.

'But we know enough of the book to know we are badly treated,' protested the hostess.

'We have always been badly treated in literature,' said Raphael. 'We are made either angels or devils. On the one hand, Lessing and George Eliot; on the other, the stock dramatist and novelist, with their low-comedy villain.'

'Oh!' said Mrs. Goldsmith doubtfully, for she could not quite think Raphael had become infected by his cousin's propensity for paradox. 'Do you think George Eliot and Lessing didn't understand the Jewish character?'

'They are the only writers who have ever understood it,' affirmed Miss Cissy Levine emphatically.

A little scornful smile played for a second about the mouth of the dark little girl.

'Stop a moment,' said Sidney. 'I've been so busy doing justice to this delicious asparagus that I have allowed Raphael to imagine nobody

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here has read "Mordecai Josephs." I have, and I say there is more actuality in it than in "Daniel Deronda" and "Nathan der Weise" put together. It is a crude production, all the same; the writer's artistic gift seems handicapped by a dead weight of moral platitudes and high falutin', and even mysticism. He not only presents his characters, but moralizes over them—actually cares whether they are good or bad, and has yearnings after the indefinable. It is all very young. Instead of being satisfied that Judea gives him characters that are interesting, he actually laments their lack of culture. Still, what he has done is good enough to make one hope his artistic instinct will shake off his moral.'

'Oh, Sidney, what are you saying?' murmured Addie.

'It's all right, little girl. You don't understand Greek.'

'It's not Greek,' put in Raphael. 'In Greek art beauty of soul and beauty of form are one. It's French you are talking, though the ignorant ateliers where you picked it up flatter themselves it's Greek.'

'It's Greek to Addie, anyhow,' laughed Sidney. 'But that's what makes the anti-Semitic chapters so unsatisfactory.'

'We all felt their unsatisfactoriness, if we

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could not analyze it so cleverly,' said the hostess.

'We all felt it,' said Mrs. Montagu Samuels.

'Yes, that's it,' said Sidney blandly. 'I could have forgiven the rose-colour of the picture if it had been more artistically painted.'

'Rose-colour!' gasped Mrs. Henry Goldsmith.

Rose-colour indeed! Not even Sidney's authority could persuade the table into that.

Poor rich Jews! The upper middle classes had every excuse for being angry. They knew they were excellent persons, well educated and well travelled, interested in charities (both Jewish and Christian), people's concerts, district-visiting, new novels, magazines, reading circles, operas, symphonies, politics, volunteer regiments, Show Sunday and Corporation banquets; that they had sons at Rugby and Oxford, and daughters who played and painted and sang, and homes that were bright oases of optimism in a jaded society; that they were good Liberals and Tories, supplementing their duties as Englishmen with a solicitude for the best interests of Judaism; that they left no stone unturned to emancipate themselves from the secular thraldom of prejudice; and they felt it very hard that a little vulgar section

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should always be chosen by their own novelists, and their efforts to raise the tone of Jewish society passed by.

Sidney, whose conversation always had the air of aloofness from the race, so that his own foibles often came under the lash of his sarcasm, proceeded to justify his assertion of the rose-colour picture in "Mordecai Josephs." He denied that modern English Jews had any religion whatever, claiming that their faith consisted of forms that had to be kept up in public, but which they were too shrewd and cute to believe in or to practise in private, though everyone might believe everyone else did; that they looked upon due payment of their synagogue bills as discharging all their obligations to Heaven; that the preachers secretly despised the old formulas, and that the Rabbinate declared its intention of dying for Judaism only as a way of living by it; that the body politic was dead and rotten with hypocrisy, though the augurs said it was alive and well. He admitted that the same was true of Christianity. Raphael reminded him that a number of Jews had drifted quite openly from the traditional teaching, that thousands of well-ordered households found inspiration and spiritual satisfaction in every form of it, and that hypocrisy was too crude a word for the

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complex motives of those who obeyed it without inner conviction.

'For instance,' said he, 'a gentleman said to me the other day—I was much touched by the expression—"I believe with my father's heart."'

'It is a good epigram,' said Sidney, impressed. 'But what is to be said of a rich community which recruits its clergy from the lowest classes? The method of election by competitive performance — common as it is among poor Dissenters—emphasizes the subjection of the shepherd to his flock. You catch your ministers young—when they are saturated with suppressed scepticism—and bribe them with small salaries that seem affluence to the sons of poor immigrants. That the ministry is not an honourable profession may be seen from the anxiety of the minister to raise his children in the social scale by bringing them up to some other line of business.'

'That is true,' said Raphael gravely. 'Our wealthy families must be induced to devote a son each to the synagogue.'

'I wish they would,' said Sidney. 'At present every second man is a lawyer. We ought to have more officers and doctors, too. I like those old Jews who smote the Philistines hip and thigh—it is not good for a race to run

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all to brain—I suppose, though, we had to develop cunning to survive at all. There was an enlightened minister whose Friday evenings I used to go to when a youth—delightful talk we had there, too; you know whom I mean. Well, one of his sons is a solicitor, and the other a stockbroker. The rich men he preached to helped to place his sons. He was a charming man, but imagine him preaching to them the truths in "Mordecai Josephs," as Mr. Saville suggested.'

'*Our* minister lets us have it hot enough, though,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith with a guffaw.

His wife hastened to obliterate the unrefined expression.

'Mr. Strelitski is a wonderfully eloquent young man, so quiet and reserved in society, but like an ancient prophet in the pulpit.'

'Yes, we were very lucky to get him,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith.

The little dark girl shuddered.

'What is the matter?' asked Raphael softly.

'I don't know. I don't like the Rev. Joseph Strelitski. He is eloquent, but his dogmatism irritates me. I don't believe he is sincere. He doesn't like me, either.'

'Oh, you're both wrong,' he said in concern.

'Strelitski is a draw, I admit,' said Mr.

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Montagu Samuels, who was the President of a rival synagogue. 'But Rosenbaum is a good pull-down on the other side, eh?'

Mr. Henry Goldsmith groaned. The second minister of the Kensington synagogue was the scandal of the community. He wasn't expected to preach, and he didn't practise.

'I've heard of that man,' said Sidney, laughing. 'He's a bit of a gambler and a spendthrift, isn't he? Why do you keep him on?'

'He has a fine voice, you see,' said Mr. Goldsmith. 'That makes a Rosenbaum faction at once. Then he has a wife and family; that makes another.'

'Strelitski isn't married, is he?' asked Sidney.

'No,' said Mr. Goldsmith; 'not yet. The congregation expects him to, though. I don't care to give him the hint myself, he is a little queer sometimes.'

'He owes it to his position,' said Miss Cissy Levine.

'That is what we think,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith, with the majestic manner that suited her opulent beauty.

'I wish we had him in our synagogue,' said Raphael. 'Michaels is a well-meaning, worthy man, but he is dreadfully dull.'

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'Poor Raphael!' said Sidney. 'Why did you abolish the old style of minister who had to slaughter the sheep? Now the minister reserves all his powers of destruction for his own flock.'

'I have given him endless hints to preach only once a month,' said Mr. Montagu Samuels dolefully. 'But every Saturday our hearts sink as we see him walk to the pulpit.'

'You see, Addie, how a sense of duty makes a man criminal,' said Sidney. 'Isn't Michaels the minister who defends orthodoxy in a way that makes the orthodox rage over his unconscious heresies, while the heterodox enjoy themselves by looking out for his historical and grammatical blunders?'

'Poor man! he works hard,' said Raphael gently. 'Let him be.'

Over the dessert the conversation turned by way of the Rev. Strelitski's marriage to the growing willingness of the younger generation to marry out of Judaism. The table discerned in intermarriage the beginning of the end.

'But why postpone the inevitable?' asked Sidney calmly. 'What is this mania for keeping up an effete-ism? Are we to cripple our lives for the sake of a word? It's all romantic fudge, the idea of perpetual isolation. You get into little cliques, and mistake narrow-

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mindedness for fidelity to an ideal. I can live for months and forget there are such beings as Jews in the world. I have floated down the Nile in a *dahabiya* while you were beating your breasts in the synagogue, and the palm-trees and the pelicans knew nothing of your sacrosanct chronological crisis, your annual epidemic of remorse.'

The table thrilled with horror, without, however, quite believing in the speaker's wickedness. Addie looked troubled.

'A man and wife of different religions can never know true happiness,' said the hostess.

'Granted,' retorted Sidney. 'But why shouldn't Jews without Judaism marry Christians without Christianity? Must a Jew needs have a Jewess to help him break the Law?'

'Intermarriage must not be tolerated,' said Raphael. 'It would hurt us less if we had a country. Lacking that, we must preserve our human boundaries.'

'You have good phrases sometimes,' admitted Sidney. 'But why must we preserve any boundaries? Why must we exist at all as a separate people?'

'To fulfil the mission of Israel,' said Mr. Montagu Samuels solemnly.

'Ah, what is that? That is one of the things nobody ever seems able to tell me.'

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'We are God's witnesses,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith, snipping off for herself a little bunch of hothouse grapes.

'False witnesses mostly, then,' said Sidney. 'A Christian friend of mine, an artist, fell in love with a girl and courted her regularly at her house for four years. Then he proposed; she told him to ask her father, and he then learnt for the first time that the family was Jewish, and his suit could not therefore be entertained. Could a satirist have invented anything funnier? Whatever it was Jews have to bear witness to, these people had been bearing witness to so effectually that a constant visitor never heard a word of the evidence during four years. And this family is not an exception; it is a type. Abroad the English Jew keeps his Judaism in the background, at home in the back kitchen. When he travels, his Judaism is not packed up among his *impedimenta*. He never obtrudes his creed, and even his Jewish newspaper is sent to him in a wrapper labelled something else. How's that for witnesses? Mind you, I'm not blaming the men, being one of 'em. They may be the best fellows going, honourable, high-minded, generous —why expect them to be martyrs more than other Englishmen? Isn't life hard enough without inventing a new hardship? I declare there's no

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narrower creature in the world than your idealist; he sets up a moral standard which suits his own line of business, and rails at men of the world for not conforming to it. God's witnesses, indeed! I say nothing of those who are rather the devil's witnesses, but think of the host of Jews like myself who, whether they marry Christians or not, simply drop out, and whose absence of all religion escapes notice in the medley of creeds. We no more give evidence than those old Spanish Jews—Marannos they were called, weren't they?—who wore the Christian mask for generations. Practically many of us are Marannos still—I don't mean the Jews who are on the stage, and the press, and all that, but the Jews who have gone on believing. One Day of Atonement I amused myself by noting the pretexts on the shutters of shops that were closed in the Strand. "Our annual holiday," "Stock-taking day," "Our annual beanfeast," "Closed for repairs."'

'Well, it's something if they keep the Fast at all,' said Mr. Henry Goldsmith. 'It shows spirituality is not dead in them.'

'Spirituality!' sneered Sidney. 'Sheer superstition, rather. A dread of thunderbolts. Besides, fasting is a sensuous *attraction*. But for the fasting, the Day of Atonement would have long since died out for these men.

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"Our annual beanfeast"! There's witnesses for you!'

'We cannot help it if we have false witnesses among us,' said Raphael Leon quietly. 'Our mission is to spread the truth of the Torah till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'

'But we don't spread it.'

'We do. Christianity and Mohammedanism are offshoots of Judaism; through them we have won the world from paganism, and taught it that God is one with the moral law.'

'Then we are somewhat in the position of an ancient schoolmaster lagging superfluous in the schoolroom, where his whilom pupils are teaching.'

'By no means. Rather of one who stays on to protest against the false additions of his whilom pupils.'

'But we don't protest.'

'Our mere existence, since the Dispersion, is a protest,' urged Raphael. 'When the stress of persecution lightens, we may protest more consciously. We cannot have been preserved in vain through so many centuries of horrors, through the invasions of the Goths and Huns, through the Crusades, through the Holy Roman Empire, through the times of Torquemada. It is not for nothing that a handful

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of Jews loom so large in the history of the world, that their past is bound up with every noble human effort, every high ideal, every development of science, literature, and art. The ancient faith that has united us so long must not be lost just as it is on the very eve of surviving the faiths that sprung from it, even as it has survived Egypt, Assyria, Rome, Greece, and the Moors. If any of us fancy we have lost it, let us keep together still. Who knows but that it will be born again in us, if we are only patient? Race affinity is a potent force, why be in a hurry to dissipate it? The Marannos you speak of were but maimed heroes, yet one day the olden flame burst through the layers of three generations of Christian profession and intermarriage, and a brilliant company of illustrious Spaniards threw up their positions and sailed away in voluntary exile to serve the God of Israel. We shall yet see a spiritual revival even among our brilliant English Jews who have hid their face from their own flesh.'

The dark little girl looked up into his face with ill-suppressed wonder.

'Have you done preaching at me, Raphael?' inquired Sidney. 'If so, pass me a banana.'

Raphael smiled sadly and obeyed.

'I'm afraid if I see much of Raphael I shall

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be converted to Judaism,' said Sidney, peeling the banana. 'I had better take a hansom to the Riviera at once. I intended to spend Christmas there; I never dreamt I should be talking theology in London.'

'Oh, I think Christmas in London is best,' said the hostess unguardedly.

'Oh, I don't know. Give me Brighton,' said the host.

'Well, yes, I suppose Brighton *is* pleasanter,' said Mr. Montagu Samuels.

'Oh, but so many Jews go there,' observed Percy Saville.

'Yes, that *is* the drawback,' said Mrs. Henry Goldsmith. 'Do you know, some years ago I discovered a delightful village in Devonshire, and took the household there in the summer. The very next year when I went down I found no less than two Jewish families temporarily located there. Of course I have never gone there since.'

'Yes, it's wonderful how Jews scent out all the nicest places,' agreed Mrs. Montagu Samuels. 'Five years ago you could escape them by not going to Ramsgate; now even the Highlands are getting impossible.'

Thereupon the hostess rose and the ladies retired to the drawing-room, leaving the gentlemen to discuss coffee, cigars, and the paradoxes

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of Sidney, who, tired of religion, looked to dumb-show plays for the salvation of dramatic literature.

There was a little milk-jug on the coffee-tray. It represented a victory over Mary O'Reilly. The late Aaron Goldsmith never took milk till six hours after meat, and it was with some trepidation that the present Mr. Goldsmith ordered it to be sent up one evening after dinner. He took an early opportunity of explaining apologetically to Mary that some of his guests were not so pious as himself, and hospitality demanded the concession.

Mr. Henry Goldsmith did not like his coffee black. His dinner-table was hardly ever without a guest.

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CHAPTER II.

RAPHAEL LEON.

WHEN the gentlemen joined the ladies, Raphael instinctively returned to his companion of the dinner-table. She had been singularly silent during the meal, but her manner had attracted him. Over his black coffee and cigarette, it struck him that she might have been unwell, and that he had been insufficiently attentive to the little duties of the table, and he hastened to ask if she had a headache.

'No, no,' she said with a grateful smile. 'At least, not more than usual.'

Her smile was full of pensive sweetness, which made her face beautiful. It was a face that would have been almost plain but for the soul behind. It was dark, with great earnest eyes. The profile was disappointing, the curves were not perfect, and there was a reminder of Polish origin in the lower jaw and the cheek-bone. Seen from the front, the face fascinated

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again, in the Eastern glow of its colouring, in the flash of the white teeth, in the depths of the brooding eyes, in the strength of the features that yet softened to womanliest tenderness and charm when flooded by the sunshine of a smile. The figure was *petite* and graceful, set off by a simple tight-fitting, high-necked dress of ivory silk draped with lace, with a spray of Neapolitan violets at the throat. They sat in a niche of the spacious and artistically furnished drawing-room, in the soft light of the candles, talking quietly while Addie played Chopin.

Mrs. Henry Goldsmith's æsthetic instincts had had full play in the elaborate carelessness of the ensemble, and the result was a triumph, a medley of Persian luxury and Parisian grace, a dream of somniferous couches and armchairs, rich tapestry, vases, fans, engravings, books, bronzes, tiles, plaques, and flowers. Mr. Henry Goldsmith was himself a connoisseur in the arts, his own and his father's fortunes having been built up in the curio and antique business, though to old Aaron Goldsmith appreciation had meant strictly pricing, despite his genius for detecting false Correggios and sham Louis Quatorze cabinets.

'Do you suffer from headaches?' inquired Raphael solicitously.

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'A little. The doctor says I studied too much and worked too hard when a little girl. Such is the punishment of perseverance. Life isn't like the copy-books.'

'Oh, but I wonder your parents let you overexert yourself.'

A melancholy smile played about the mobile lips. 'I brought myself up,' she said. 'You look puzzled. Oh, I know! Confess you think I'm Miss Goldsmith!'

'Why—are—you not?' he stammered.

'No, my name is Ansell—Esther Ansell.'

'Pardon me. I am so bad at remembering names in introductions. But I've just come back from Oxford, and it's the first time I've been to this house, and seeing you here without a cavalier when we arrived, I thought you lived here.'

'You thought rightly; I do live here.' She laughed gently at his changing expression.

'I wonder Sidney never mentioned you to me,' he said.

'Do you mean Mr. Graham?' she said with a slight blush.

'Yes; I know he visits here.'

'Oh, he is an artist. He has eyes only for the beautiful.'

She spoke quickly, a little embarrassed.

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'You wrong him; his interests are wider than that.'

'Do you know, I am so glad you didn't pay me the obvious compliment,' she said, recovering herself. 'It looked as if I were fishing for it. I'm so stupid.'

He looked at her blankly.

'*I'm* stupid,' he said, 'for I don't know what compliment I missed paying.'

'If you regret it, I shall not think so well of you,' she said. 'You know I've heard all about your brilliant success at Oxford.'

'They put all those petty little things in the Jewish papers, don't they?'

'I read it in the *Times*,' retorted Esther. 'You took a double-first and the prize for poetry, and a heap of other things; but I noticed the prize for poetry, because it is so rare to find a Jew writing poetry.'

'Prize poetry is not poetry,' he reminded her. 'But considering the Jewish Bible contains the finest poetry in the world, I do not see why you should be surprised to find a Jew trying to write some.'

'Oh, you know what I mean,' answered Esther. 'What is the use of talking about the old Jews? We seem to be a different race now. Who cares for poetry?'

'Our poet's scroll reaches on uninterruptedly

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through the Middle Ages. The passing phenomenon of to-day must not blind us to the real traits of our race,' said Raphael.

'Nor must we be blind to the passing phenomenon of to-day,' retorted Esther. 'We have no ideals now.'

'I see Sidney has been infecting you,' he said gently.

'No, no; I beg you will not think that,' she said, flushing almost resentfully. 'I have thought these things, as the Scripture tells us to meditate on the Law, day and night, sleeping and waking, standing up and sitting down.'

'You cannot have thought of them without prejudice, then,' he answered, 'if you say we have no ideals.'

'I mean, we're not responsive to great poetry — to the message of a Browning, for instance.'

'I deny it. Only a small percentage of his own race is responsive. I would wager our percentage is proportionally higher. But Browning's philosophy of religion is already ours—for hundreds of years every Saturday night every Jew has been proclaiming the view of life and Providence in "Pisgah Sights:"'

'"All's lend and borrow,
Good, see, wants evil,
Joy demands sorrow,
Angel weds devil."

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What is this but the philosophy of our formula for ushering out the Sabbath and welcoming in the day of toil, accepting the holy and the profane, the light and the darkness ?'

'Is that in the Prayer-Book ?' said Esther, astonished.

'Yes, you see you are ignorant of our own ritual while admiring everything non-Jewish. Excuse me if I am frank, Miss Ansell, but there are many people among us who rave over Italian antiquities, but can see nothing poetical in old Judaism. They listen eagerly to Dante, but despise David.'

'I shall certainly look up the liturgy,' said Esther. 'But that will not alter my opinion. The Jew may say these fine things, but they are only a tune to him. Yes, I begin to recall the passage in Hebrew—I see my father making *Havdalah*—the melody goes in my head like a sing-song. But I never in my life thought of the meaning. As a little girl I always got my conscious religious inspiration out of the New Testament. It sounds very shocking, I know.'

'Undoubtedly you put your finger on an evil. But there is religious edification in common prayers and ceremonies even when divorced from meaning. Remember the Latin prayers of the Catholic poor. Jews may be below Judaism, but are not all men below their

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creed? If the race which gave the world the Bible knows it least——'

He stopped suddenly, for Addie was playing pianissimo, and although she was his sister, he did not like to put her out.

'It comes to this,' said Esther, when Chopin spoke louder: 'our Prayer-Book needs depolarisation, as Wendell Holmes says of the Bible.'

'Exactly,' assented Raphael. 'And what our people need is to make acquaintance with the treasure of our own literature. Why go to Browning for theism, when the words of his "Rabbi Ben Ezra" are but a synopsis of a famous Jewish argument?

"'I see the whole design,
I, who saw Power, see now Love, perfect too.
Perfect I call Thy plan,
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remaker, complete, I trust what Thou shalt do."'

It sounds like a bit of Bachja. That there is a Power outside us nobody denies; that this Power works for our good and wisely is not so hard to grant when the facts of the soul are weighed with the facts of Nature. Power, Love, Wisdom—there you have a real trinity which makes up the Jewish God. And in this God we trust — incomprehensible as are His ways, unintelligible as is His essence. "Thy ways are not My ways, nor thy thoughts My

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thoughts." That comes into collision with no modern philosophies—we appeal to experience, and make no demands upon the faculty for believing things "because they are impossible." And we are proud and happy in that the dread Unknown God of the infinite universe has chosen our race as the medium by which to reveal His will to the world. We are sanctified to His service. History testifies that this has verily been our mission, that we have taught the world Religion as truly as Greece has taught Beauty and Science. Our miraculous survival through the cataclysms of ancient and modern dynasties is a proof that our mission is not yet over.'

The sonata came to an end. Percy Saville started a comic song, playing his own accompaniment. Fortunately, it was loud and rollicking.

'And do you really believe that we are sanctified to God's service?' said Esther, casting a melancholy glance at Percy's grimaces.

'Can there be any doubt of it? God made choice of one race to be messengers and apostles, martyrs at need to His truth. Happily the sacred duty is ours,' he said earnestly, utterly unconscious of the incongruity that struck Esther so keenly. And yet, of the two, he had by far the greater gift of humour. It did

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not destroy his idealism, but kept it in touch with things mundane. Esther's vision, though more penetrating, lacked this corrective of humour, which makes always for breadth of view. Perhaps it was because she was a woman that the trivial sordid details of life's comedy hurt her so acutely that she could scarce sit out the play patiently. Where Raphael would have admired the lute, Esther was troubled by the little rifts in it.

'But isn't that a narrow conception of God's revelation?' she asked.

'No. Why should God not teach through a great race as through a great man?'

'And you really think that Judaism is not dead, intellectually speaking?'

'How can it die? Its truths are eternal, deep in human nature and the constitution of things. Ah, I wish I could get you to see with the eyes of the great Rabbis and sages in Israel; to look on this human life of ours, not with the pessimism of Christianity, but as a holy and precious gift, to be enjoyed heartily, yet spent in God's service—birth, marriage, death, all holy; good, evil, alike holy. Nothing on God's earth common or purposeless; everything chanting the great song of God's praise, "The morning stars singing together," as we say in the Dawn Service.'

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As he spoke Esther's eyes filled with strange tears. Enthusiasm always infected her, and for a brief instant her sordid universe seemed to be transfigured to a sacred joyous reality, full of infinite potentialities of worthy work and noble pleasure. A thunder of applausive hands marked the end of Percy Saville's comic song. Mr. Montagu Samuels was beaming at his brother's grotesque drollery. There was an interval of general conversation, followed by a round game, in which Raphael and Esther had to take part. It was very dull, and they were glad to find themselves together again.

'Ah, yes,' said Esther sadly, resuming the conversation as if there had been no break; 'but this is a Judaism of your own creation. The real Judaism is a religion of pots and pans. It does not call to the soul's depths like Christianity.'

'Again, it is a question of the point of view taken. From a practical, our ceremonialism is a training in self-conquest, while it links the generations, "bound each to each by natural piety," and unifies our atoms, dispersed to the four corners of the earth, as nothing else could. From a theoretical, it is but an extension of the principle I tried to show you. Eating, drinking, every act of life is holy, is sanctified by some relation to Heaven. We will not

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arbitrarily divorce some portions of life from religion, and say these are of the world, the flesh or the devil, any more than we will save up our religion for Sundays. There is no devil, no original sin, no need of salvation from it, no need of a mediator. Every Jew is in as direct relation with God as the Chief Rabbi. Christianity is an historical failure; its counsels of perfection, its command to turn the other cheek, a farce. When a modern spiritual genius, a Tolstoi, repeats it, all Christendom laughs as at a new freak of insanity. All practical honourable men are Jews at heart. Judaism has never tampered with human dignity, nor perverted the moral consciousness. Our housekeeper, a Catholic, once said to my sister Addie: "I'm so glad to see you do so much charity, miss. *I* need not, because I'm saved already." Judaism is the true "religion of humanity." It does not seek to make men and women angels before their time. Our marriage service blesses the King of the Universe, who has created "joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, love, brotherhood, peace and fellowship." '

'It is all very beautiful in theory,' said Esther; 'but so is Christianity, which is also not to be charged with its historical caricatures,

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nor with its superiority to average human nature. As for the doctrine of original sin, it is the one thing that the science of heredity has demonstrated, with a difference. But do not be alarmed; I do not call myself a Christian because I see some relation between the dogmas of Christianity and the truths of experience, nor even because'—here she smiled wistfully —'I should like to believe in Jesus. But you are less logical. When you said there was no devil, I felt sure I was right, that you belong to the modern schools that get rid of all the old beliefs, but cannot give up the old names. You know as well as I do that, take away the belief in hell—a real old-fashioned hell of fire and brimstone—even such Judaism as survives would freeze to death without that genial warmth.'

'I know nothing of the kind,' he said. 'And I am in no sense a modern. I am (to adopt a phrase which is to me tautologous) an orthodox Jew.'

Esther smiled.

'Forgive my smiling,' she said. 'I am thinking of the orthodox Jews I used to know, who used to bind their phylacteries on their arms and foreheads every morning.'

'I bind my phylacteries on my arm and forehead every morning,' he said simply.

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'What!' gasped Esther. 'You, an Oxford man!'

'Yes,' he said gravely. 'Is it so astonishing to you?'

'Yes, it is. You are the first educated Jew I have ever met who believed in that sort of thing.'

'Nonsense?' he said inquiringly. 'There are hundreds like me.'

She shook her head. 'There's the Rev. Joseph Strelitski. I suppose *he* does, but then he's paid for it.'

'Oh, why will you sneer at Strelitski?' he said, pained. 'He has a noble soul. It is to the privilege of his conversation that I owe my best understanding of Judaism.'

'Ah, I was wondering why the old arguments sounded so different, so much more convincing, from your lips,' murmured Esther. 'Now I know: because he wears a white tie. That sets up all my bristles of contradiction when he opens his mouth.'

'But I wear a white tie, too,' said Raphael, his smile broadening in sympathy with the slow response on the girl's serious face.

'That's not a trade-mark,' she protested. 'But forgive me, I didn't know Strelitski was a friend of yours. I won't say a word against him any more. His sermons really

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are above the average, and he strives more than the others to make Judaism more spiritual.'

'More spiritual!' he repeated, the pained expression returning. 'Why, the very theory of Judaism has always been the spiritualization of the material.'

'And the practice of Judaism has always been the materialization of the spiritual,' she answered.

He pondered the saying thoughtfully, his face growing sadder.

'You have lived among your books,' Esther went on. 'I have lived among the brutal facts. I was born in the Ghetto, and when you talk of the mission of Israel, silent sardonic laughter goes through me as I think of the squalor and the misery.'

'God works through human suffering. His ways are large,' said Raphael almost in a whisper.

'And wasteful,' said Esther. 'Spare me clerical platitudes *à la* Strelitski. I have seen so much.'

'And suffered much?' he asked gently.

She nodded, scarce perceptibly.

'Oh, if you only knew my life!'

'Tell it me,' he said. His voice was soft and caressing. His frank soul seemed to pierce

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through all conventionalities, and to go straight to hers.

'I cannot—not now,' she murmured. 'There is so much to tell.'

'Tell me a little,' he urged.

She began to speak of her history, scarce knowing why, forgetting he was a stranger. Was it racial affinity, or was it merely the spiritual affinity of souls that feel their identity through all differences of brain?

'What is the use?' she said. 'You with your childhood could never realize mine. My mother died when I was seven; my father was a Russian pauper alien who rarely got work. I had an elder brother of brilliant promise. He died before he was thirteen. I had a lot of brothers and sisters and a grandmother, and we all lived, half starved, in a garret.'

Her eyes grew humid at the recollection; she saw the spacious drawing-room and the dainty *bric-à-brac* through a mist.

'Poor child!' murmured Raphael.

'Strelitski, by the way, lived in our street then. He sold cigars on commission and earned an honest living; sometimes I used to think that is why he never cares to meet my eye, he remembers me and knows I remember him; at other times I thought he knew that I saw through his professions of orthodoxy. But as

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you champion him, I suppose I must look for a more creditable reason for his inability to look me straight in the face. Well, I grew up, I got on well at school, and about ten years ago I won a prize given by Mrs. Henry Goldsmith, whose kindly interest I excited thenceforward. At thirteen I became a teacher. This had always been my aspiration ; when it was granted I was more unhappy than ever. I began to realize acutely that we were terribly poor. I found it difficult to dress so as to ensure the respect of my pupils and colleagues ; the work was unspeakably hard and unpleasant ; tiresome and hungry little girls had to be ground to suit the inspectors, and fell victims to the then prevalent competition among teachers for a high percentage of passes ; I had to teach Scripture history, and I didn't believe in it. None of us believed in it—the talking serpent, the Egyptian miracles, Samson, Jonah and the whale, and all that. Everything about me was sordid and unlovely. I yearned for a fuller, wider life, for larger knowledge. I hungered for the sun. In short I was intensely miserable. At home things went from bad to worse ; often I was the sole bread-winner, and my few shillings a week were our only income. My brother Solomon grew up, but could not get into a decent situation, because he must not

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work on the Sabbath. Oh, if you knew how young lives are cramped and shipwrecked at the start by this one curse of the Sabbath, you would not wish us to persevere in our isolation. It sent a mad thrill of indignation through me to find my father daily entreating the deaf heavens.'

He would not argue now. His eyes were moist.

'Go on,' he murmured.

'The rest is nothing. Mrs. Henry Goldsmith stepped in as the *deus ex machinâ*. She had no children, and she took it into her head to adopt me. Naturally I was dazzled, though anxious about my brothers and sisters. But my father looked upon it as a godsend. Without consulting me, Mrs. Goldsmith arranged that he and the other children should be shipped to America; she got him some work at a relative's in Chicago. I suppose she was afraid of having the family permanently hanging about the Terrace. At first I was grieved; but when the pain of parting was over I found myself relieved to be rid of them, especially of my father. It sounds shocking, I know, but I can confess all my vanities now, for I have learnt all is vanity. I thought Paradise was opening before me; I was educated by the best masters, and graduated at the London

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University. I travelled and saw the Continent, had my fill of sunshine and beauty. I have had many happy moments, realized many childish ambitions, but happiness is as far away as ever. My old school colleagues envy me; yet I do not know whether I would not go back without regret.'

'Is there anything lacking in your life, then?' he asked gently.

'No; I happen to be a nasty, discontented little thing—that is all,' she said, with a faint smile. 'Look on me as a psychological paradox, or a text for the preacher.'

'And do the Goldsmiths know of your discontent?'

'Heaven forbid! They have been so very kind to me. We get along very well together. I never discuss religion with them, only the services and the minister.'

'And your relatives?'

'Oh, they are all well and happy. Solomon has a store in Detroit. He is only nineteen, and dreadfully enterprising. Father is a pillar of a Chicago *Chevrah*. He still talks Yiddish. He has escaped learning American just as he escaped learning English. I buy him a queer old Hebrew book sometimes with my pocket-money, and he is happy. One little sister is a typewriter, and the other is just out of school

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and does the house-work. I suppose I shall go out and see them all some day.'

'What became of the grandmother you mentioned?'

'She had a charity funeral a year before the miracle happened. She was very weak and ill, and the charity doctor warned her that she must not fast on the Day of Atonement. But she wouldn't even moisten her parched lips with a drop of cold water. And so she died, exhorting my father with her last breath to beware of Mrs. Simons (a good-hearted widow who was very kind to us), and to marry a pious Polish woman.'

'And did he?'

'No, I am still stepmotherless. Your white tie's gone wrong. It's all on one side.'

'It generally is,' said Raphael, fumbling perfunctorily at the little bow.

'Let me put it straight. There! And now you know all about me, I hope you are going to repay my confidences in kind.'

'I am afraid I cannot oblige with anything so romantic,' he said, smiling. 'I was born of rich but honest parents, of a family settled in England for three generations, and went to Harrow and Oxford in due course. That is all. I saw a little of the Ghetto, though, when I was a boy. I had some correspondence on

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Hebrew literature with a great Jewish scholar, Gabriel Hamburg (he lives in Stockholm now), and one day when I was up from Harrow I went to see him. By good fortune I assisted at the foundation of the Holy Land League, now presided over by Gideon, the member for Whitechapel. I was moved to tears by the enthusiasm. It was there I made the acquaintance of Strelitski. He spoke as if inspired. I also met a poverty-stricken poet, Melchitzedek Pinchas, who afterwards sent me his work, "Metatoron's Flames," to Harrow. A real neglected genius. Now, there's the man to bear in mind when one speaks of Jews and poetry! After that night I kept up a regular intercourse with the Ghetto, and have been there several times lately.'

'But surely you don't also long to return to Palestine?'

'I do. Why should we not have our own country?'

'It would be too chaotic. Fancy all the Ghettos of the world amalgamating! Everybody would want to be ambassador at Paris, as the old joke says.'

'It would be a problem for the statesmen among us. Dissenters, Churchmen, atheists, slum-savages, clodhoppers, philosophers, aristocrats—make up Protestant England. It is

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the popular ignorance of the fact that Jews are as diverse as Protestants that makes such novels as we were discussing at dinner harmful.'

'But is the author to blame for that? He does not claim to present the whole truth, but a facet. English society lionized Thackeray for his pictures of it. Good heavens! do Jews suppose they alone are free from the snobbery, hypocrisy and vulgarity that have shadowed every society that has ever existed?'

'In no work of art can the spectator be left out of account,' he urged. 'In a world full of smouldering prejudices a scrap of paper may start the bonfire. English society can afford to laugh where Jewish society must weep. That is why our papers are always so effusively grateful for Christian compliments. You see, it is quite true that the author paints not the Jew, but bad Jews; but, in the absence of paintings of good Jews, bad Jews are taken as identical with Jews.'

'Oh, then you agree with the others about the book?' she said, in a disappointed tone.

'I haven't read it; I am speaking generally. Have you?'

'Yes.'

'And what did you think of it? I don't remember your expressing an opinion at table.'

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She pondered an instant.

'I thought highly of it, and agreed with every word of it——'

She paused. He looked expectantly into the dark intense face; he saw it was charged with further speech.

'Till I met you,' she concluded abruptly.

A wave of emotion passed over his face.

'You don't mean that?' he murmured.

'Yes, I do. You have shown me new lights.'

'I thought I was speaking platitudes,' he said simply. 'It would be nearer the truth to say you have given *me* new lights.'

The little face flushed with pleasure, the dark skin shining, the eyes sparkling. Esther looked quite pretty.

'How is that possible?' she said. 'You have read and thought twice as much as I.'

'Then you must be indeed poorly off,' he said, smiling. 'But I am really glad we met. I have been asked to edit a new Jewish paper, and our talk has made me see more clearly the lines on which it must be run if it is to do any good. I am awfully indebted to you.'

'A new Jewish paper?' she said, deeply interested. 'We have so many already. What is its *raison d'être?*'

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'To convert you,' he said, smiling, but with a ring of seriousness in the words.

'Isn't that like a steam-hammer cracking a nut, or Hoti burning down his house to roast a pig? And suppose I refuse to take in the new Jewish paper? Will it suspend publication?'

He laughed.

'What's this about a new Jewish paper?' said Mrs. Goldsmith, suddenly appearing in front of them with her large genial smile. 'Is that what you two have been plotting? I noticed you've laid your heads together all the evening. Ah well, birds of a feather flock together. Do you know, my little Esther took the scholarship for logic at London? I wanted her to proceed to the M.A. at once, but the doctor said she must have a rest.' She laid her hand affectionately on the girl's hair.

Esther looked embarrassed.

'And so she is still a Bachelor?' said Raphael, smiling, but evidently impressed.

'Yes, but not for long, I hope,' returned Mrs. Goldsmith. 'Come, darling, everybody's dying to hear one of your little songs.'

'The dying is premature,' said Esther. 'You know I only sing for my own amusement.'

'Sing for mine, then,' pleaded Raphael.

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'To make you laugh?' queried Esther. 'I know you'll laugh at the way I play the accompaniment. One's fingers have to be used to it from childhood——'

Her eyes finished the sentence, 'and you know what mine was.'

The look seemed to seal their secret sympathy.

She went to the piano and sang in a thin but trained soprano. The song was a ballad with a quaint air full of sadness and heart-break. To Raphael, who had never heard the psalmic wails of the Sons of the Covenant or the Polish ditties of Fanny Belcovitch, it seemed also full of originality. He wished to lose himself in the sweet melancholy, but Mrs. Goldsmith, who had taken Esther's seat at his side, would not let him.

'Her own composition, words and music,' she whispered. 'I wanted her to publish it, but she is so shy and retiring. Who would think she was the child of a pauper immigrant, a rough jewel one has picked up and polished? If you really are going to start a new Jewish paper, she might be of use to you. And then there is Miss Cissy Levine: you have read her novels, of course? Sweetly pretty. Do you know, I think we are badly in want of a new paper, and you are the only man in the com-

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munity who could give it us. We want educating, we poor people, we know so little of our faith and our literature.'

'I am so glad you feel the want of it,' whispered Raphael, forgetting Esther in his pleasure at finding a soul yearning for the light.

'Intensely. I suppose it will be advanced?'

Raphael looked at her a moment a little bewildered.

'No, it will be orthodox. It is the orthodox party that supplies the funds.'

A flash of light leapt into Mrs. Goldsmith's eyes.

'I am so glad it is not as I feared,' she said. 'The rival party has hitherto monopolized the press, and I was afraid that, like most of our young men of talent, you would give it that tendency. Now at last we poor orthodox will have a voice. It will be written in English?'

'As far as I can,' he said, smiling.

'No, you know what I mean. I thought the majority of the orthodox couldn't read English, and that they have their Jargon papers. Will you be able to get a circulation?'

'There are thousands of families in the East End now among whom English is read, if not written. The evening papers sell as well there as anywhere else in London.'

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'Bravo!' exclaimed Mrs. Goldsmith, clapping her hands.

Esther had finished her song. Raphael awoke to the remembrance of her. But she did not come to him again, sitting down instead on a lounge near the piano, where Sidney bantered Addie with his most paradoxical persiflage.

Raphael looked at her. Her expression was abstracted; her eyes had an inward look. He hoped her headache had not got worse. She did not look at all pretty now. She seemed a frail little creature with a sad, thoughtful face and an air of being alone in the midst of a merry company. Poor little thing! He felt as if he had known her for years. She seemed curiously out of harmony with all these people. He doubted even his own capacity to commune with her inmost soul. He wished he could be of service to her, could do anything for her that might lighten her gloom and turn her morbid thoughts in healthier directions.

The butler brought in some claret negus. It was the break-up signal. Raphael drank his negus with a pleasant sense of arming himself against the cold air. He wanted to walk home smoking his pipe, which he always carried in his overcoat. He clasped Esther's hand with a cordial smile of farewell.

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'We shall meet again soon, I trust,' he said.

'I hope so,' said Esther. 'Put me down as a subscriber to that paper.'

'Thank you,' he said; 'I won't forget.'

'What's that?' said Sidney, pricking up his ears, 'doubled your circulation already?'

Sidney put Cousin Addie into a hansom, as she did not care to walk, and got in beside her.

'My feet are tired,' she said; 'I danced a lot last night, and was out a lot this afternoon. It's all very well for Raphael, who doesn't know whether he's walking on his head or his heels. Here, put your collar up, Raphael; not like that, it's all crumpled. Haven't you got a handkerchief to put round your throat? Where's that one I gave you? Lend him yours, Sidney.'

'You don't mind if *I* catch my death of cold. I've got to go on to a Christmas dance when I deposit you on your doorstep,' grumbled Sidney. 'Catch! There, you duffer! It's gone into the mud. Sure you won't jump in? Plenty of room. Addie can sit on my knee. Well, ta-ta! Merry Christmas!'

Raphael lit his pipe and strode off with long ungainly strides. It was a clear, frosty night, and the moonlight glistened on the silent spaces of street and square.

'Go to bed, my dear,' said Mrs. Goldsmith,

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returning to the lounge where Esther still sat brooding. 'You look quite worn out.'

Left alone, Mrs. Goldsmith smiled pleasantly at Mr. Goldsmith, who, uncertain of how he had behaved himself, always waited anxiously for the verdict. He was pleased to find it was 'Not guilty' this time.

'I think that went off very well,' she said. She was looking very lovely to-night, the low bodice emphasizing the voluptuous outlines of the bust.

'Splendidly!' he returned. He stood with his coat-tails to the fire, his coarse-grained face beaming like an extra lamp. 'The people and those croquettes were A 1. The way Mary's picked up French cookery is wonderful.'

'Yes, especially considering she denies herself butter. But I'm not thinking of that, nor of our guests.' He looked at her, wondering. 'Henry,' she continued impressively, 'how would you like to get into Parliament?'

'Eh, Parliament? Me?' he stammered.

'Yes, why not? I've always had it in my eye.'

His face grew gloomy.

'It is not practicable,' he said, shaking the head with the prominent teeth and ears.

'Not practicable!' she echoed sharply. 'Just think of what you've achieved already, and

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don't tell me you're going to stop now. Not practicable, indeed! Why, that's the very word you used years ago in the provinces when I said you ought to be President. You said old Winkelstein had been in the position too long to be ousted. And yet I felt certain your superior English would tell in the long run in such a miserable congregation of foreigners, and when Winkelstein had made that delicious blunder about the "university" of the Exodus instead of the "anniversary," and I went about laughing over it in all the best circles, the poor man's day was over. And when we came to London, and seemed to fall again to the bottom of the ladder because our greatness was swallowed up in the vastness, didn't you despair then? Didn't you tell me that we should never rise to the surface?'

'It didn't seem probable, did it?' he murmured in self-defence.

'Of course not. That's just my point. Your getting into the House of Commons doesn't seem probable now. But in those days your getting merely to know M.P.'s was equally improbable. The synagogal dignities were all filled up by old hands; there was no way of getting on the Council and meeting our magnates.'

'Yes, but your solution of that difficulty

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won't do here. I had not much difficulty in persuading the United Synagogue that a new synagogue was a crying want in Kensington, but I could hardly persuade the Government that a new constituency is a crying want in London.'

He spoke pettishly; his ambition always required rousing, and was easily daunted.

'No, but somebody's going to start a new something else, Henry,' said Mrs. Goldsmith with enigmatic cheerfulness. 'Trust in me; think of what we have done in less than a dozen years at comparatively trifling cost, thanks to that happy idea of a new synagogue —you, the representative of the Kensington synagogue, with a "Sir" for a colleague and a congregation that from exceptionally small beginnings has sprung up to be the most fashionable in London; likewise a member of the Council of the Anglo-Jewish Association and an honorary officer of the *Shechitah* Board; I, connected with several first-class charities, on the committee of our leading school, and the acknowledged discoverer of a girl who gives promise of doing something notable in literature or music. We have a reputation for wealth, culture, and hospitality, and it is quite two years since we shook off the last of the Maida Vale lot, who are so graphi-

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cally painted in that novel of Mr. Armitage's. Who are our guests now? Take to-night's. A celebrated artist, a brilliant young Oxford man, both scions of the same wealthy and well-considered family; an authoress of repute, who dedicates her books (by permission) to the very first families of the community; and, lastly, the Montagu Samuels, with the brother, Percy Saville, who go only to the best houses. Is there any other house, where the company is so exclusively Jewish, that could boast of a better gathering?'

'I don't say anything against the company,' said her husband awkwardly; 'it's better than we got in the provinces. But your company isn't your constituency. What constituency would have me?'

'Certainly no ordinary constituency would have you,' admitted his wife frankly. 'I am thinking of Whitechapel.'

'But Gideon represents Whitechapel.'

'Certainly; as Sidney Graham says, he represents it very well. But he has made himself unpopular; his name has appeared in print as a guest at City banquets, where the food can't be *kosher*. He has alienated a goodly proportion of the Jewish vote.'

'Well?' said Mr. Goldsmith, still wonderingly.

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'Now is the time to bid for his shoes. Raphael Leon is about to establish a new Jewish paper. I was mistaken about that young man. You remember my telling you I had heard he was eccentric, and despite his brilliant career a little touched on religious matters. I naturally supposed his case was like that of one or two other Jewish young men we know, and that he yearned for spirituality, and his remarks at table rather confirmed the impression. But he is worse than that—and I nearly put my foot in it—his craziness is on the score of orthodoxy. Fancy that!—a man who has been to Harrow and Oxford longing for a gaberdine and side-curls! Well, well, live and learn! What a sad trial for his parents!'

She paused, musing.

'But, Rosetta, what has Raphael Leon to do with my getting into Parliament?'

'Don't be stupid, Henry! Haven't I explained to you that Leon is going to start an orthodox paper which will be circulated among your future constituents? It's extremely fortunate that we have always kept to our religion. We have a widespread reputation for orthodoxy. We are friends with Leon, and we can get Esther to write for the paper (I could see he was rather struck by her). Through

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this paper we can keep you and your orthodoxy constantly before the constituency. The poor people are quite fascinated by the idea of rich Jews like us keeping a strictly *kosher* table, but the image of a Member of Parliament with phylacteries on his forehead will simply intoxicate them.'

She smiled herself at the image—the smile that always intoxicated Percy Saville.

'You're a wonderful woman, Rosetta,' said Henry, smiling in response with admiring affection and making his incisors more prominent. He drew her head down to him and kissed her lips. She returned his kiss lingeringly, and they had a flash of that happiness which is born of mutual fidelity and trust.

'Can I do anything for you, mum, afore I go to bed?' said stout old Mary O'Reilly, appearing at the door.

Mary was a privileged person, unappalled even by the butler. Having no relatives, she never took a holiday, and never went out, except to chapel.

'No, Mary, thank you. The dinner was excellent. Good-night, and merry Christmas!'

'Same to you, mum;' and as the unconscious instrument of Henry Goldsmith's candidature turned away, the Christmas bells broke merrily upon the night. The peals fell upon the ears

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of Raphael Leon, still striding along, casting a gaunt shadow on the hoar-frosted pavement, but he marked them not; upon Addie, sitting by her bedroom mirror thinking of Sidney speeding to the Christmas dance; upon Esther, turning restlessly on the luxurious eider-down, oppressed by panoramic pictures of the martyrdom of her race. Lying between sleep and waking, especially when her brain had been excited, she had the faculty of seeing wonderful vivid visions, indistinguishable from realities. The martyrs who mounted the scaffold and the stake all had the face of Raphael.

'The mission of Israel' buzzed through her brain. Oh, the irony of history! Here was another life going to be wasted on an illusory dream. The figures of Raphael and her father suddenly came into grotesque juxtaposition. A bitter smile passed across her face.

The Christmas bells rang on, proclaiming peace in the name of Him who came to bring a sword into the world.

'Surely,' she thought, 'the people of Christ has been the Christ of peoples.'

And then she sobbed meaninglessly in the darkness.

END OF VOL. II.

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